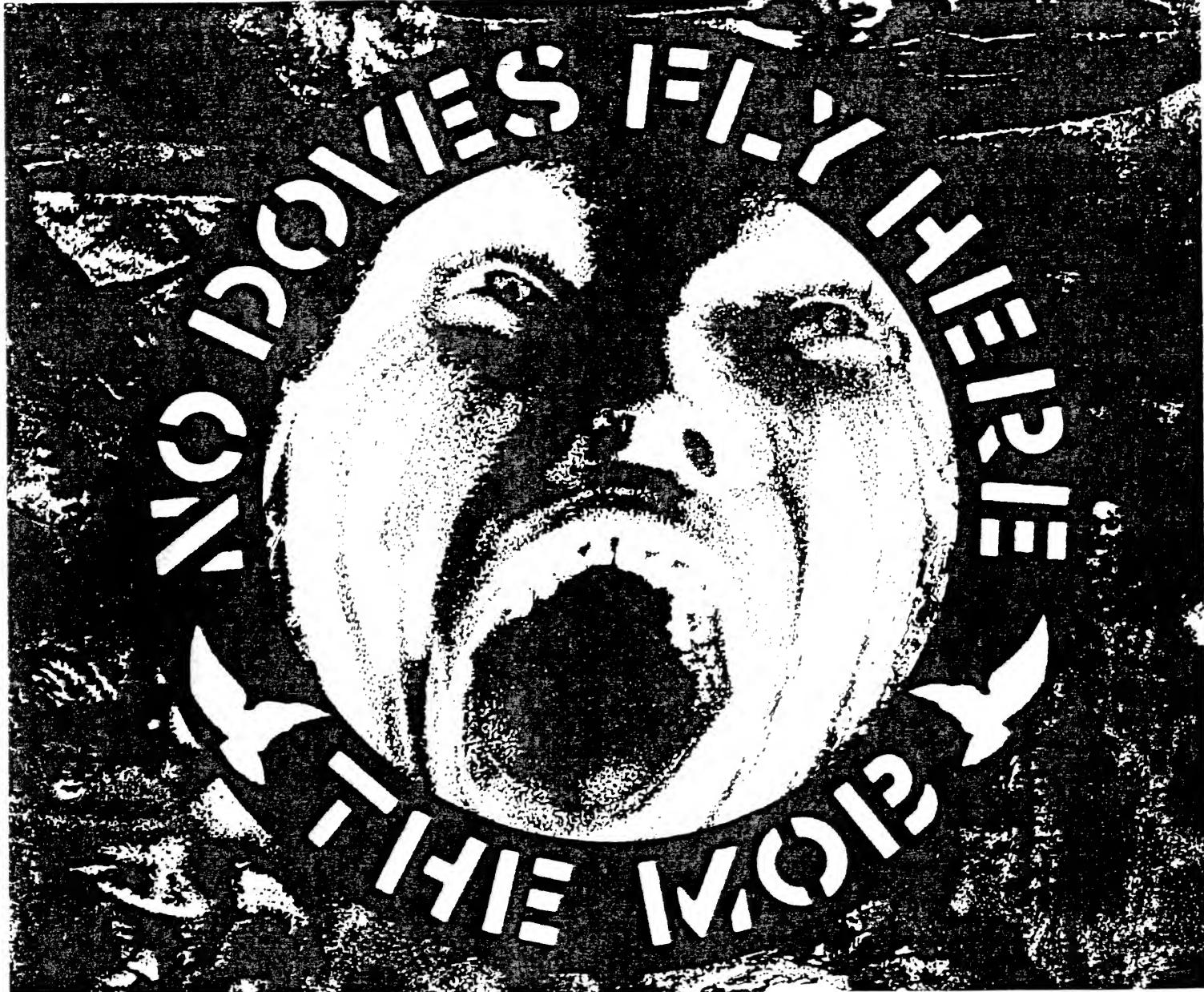


SOME HOPE AND SOME DESPAIR

ISSUE 4 - SOMETIME 2001 - 3 DOLLARS



KRONSTADT UPRISING
LACK OF KNOWLEDGE
THE MOB
SEMAUTOMATIC

...PLUS THE USUAL RANTS AND RAVES

SOME HOPE AND SOME DESPAIR

Welcome to the latest exercise in self-serving ranting and raving. Lots more of my inanity this time around which people seem to think was lacking in the past. I wrote most of the rants off the cuff. So, I'm not totally sure what to think of all of them. Here's a little guide aimed at people who think I'm an asshole or don't know what the fuck I'm talking about. You may yet be right...

I wanted to include the little blurb I wrote about the band PEE who broke up a few years ago. Not much has been heard from those folks musically since the band split. Tiber, of course, wound up playing bass for Lowercase until they split. Andee's other main band, A Minor Forest, also split around the same time. He's played with J Church from time to time and still has his perennial project with Ticklish Warrior. He spends most of his time running his amazing record label, Tumult and working at Aquarius Records in Frisco. Not much from Kelly and Jim lately, however, so it seemed like a good idea to run the piece again. Just a little reminder that some great things happen and go un-noticed and eventually become forgotten blips in underground music history. It's a shame more people didn't know about PEE.

The bit on Star Wars and the Red Sox was ranted off one night while watching Ken Burns' baseball documentary and bumming a little on "Episode 1". I'm really not an American League fan at all. I'll almost always stick with the NL in a World Series with the exceptions of the Braves or the Red Sox being in the series. In the event of either happening, my allegiance will probably change.

The thing about Sid Vicious was last seen in Sky-scraper a few issues back. After seeing "Filth And The Fury" I'd like to add that I really don't mean to attack him or Johnny Thunders personally but rather the image and signifier that people worship and praise. I don't know.

The political stuff speaks for itself I hope. Suffice it to say I'm not proud of the USA and I'm not proud to be an American. Give Palestine back to the Palestinians.

Most of the music stuff is also pretty self-explanatory. I guess the rant that has gotten the most reaction already has been the one about Black Dice and Total Shutdown. Here are a few facts I'd like to clear up:

1. I like the Locust.
2. I like Sonic Youth.
3. I'm not a jazz expert. I don't pretend to be.
4. I can't explain my opinion on the issues surrounding race and free jazz/ avant-garde/ creative music in a fanzine. To get an idea of where I'm coming from I refer you to "As Serious As Your Life" by Valerie Wilmer and "Black Talk" by Ben Sidran.

I have nothing in particular against Black Dice or Total Shutdown or the music they play. That rant had more to do with a discussion started on the avant-garde newsgroup about these bands being referred to as "free jazz" or "avant-garde jazz". A lot of people were discussing it in an area they called "White Boy Appropriation". I was just adding my two cents.

Anyway, fuck it, I doubt anyone agrees with everything I write. That's cool. I can't think of anyone that I totally agree with either. That's life.

Next issue will be a bit crazier. I finally got an interview sorted out with free jazz / avant-garde legend Bill Dixon. It will be couple with an extensive review of his "Odyssey" which I've been listening to constantly for the past few months. That issue will also feature my interview with David Kerekes. You may or may not know him as the author of "Killing For Culture" among other books on the seedy underbelly of crime and cinema, also the editor of British journal/fanzine "Headpress". I think he will be moving to newsprint as well. Cheaper...

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EULOGY FOR A BAND THAT DIED UN-NOTICED

Earlier this year, PEE played their final gig at the Bottom Of The Hill. The four members vowed to re-configure and continue playing music. It's been six months with no signs of life so I feel a eulogy is now appropriate...

PEE was one of my favorite Bay Area bands to see live. While reaching for something more complex and textured than simple indie or pop punk they set ambitious goals in aural aesthetics in world of bad rock bands happy to play their most worn out progressions over and over. It's not enough to talk about the songs and the music. The local shows were something special. When they were great, it was exciting and awe-inspiring in its layers. When they stunk, it was still fun. They knew when they were bad but also were aware of their past accomplishments. Sometimes they could step back from a wrong note or sloppy transition and laugh. It's rare when a band so musically aware can also be conscious of their audience and the desire for inclusion.

It's not enough to say that they had male and female vocals. The harmonies were structured un-like most in rock music. Keeping in key, the notes were placed without random in the most un-traveled lengths of the scale. While experimenting with new ideas and tones, the vocals were never actually discordant or atonal. The hardest thing to do is to work with existing structure and make THAT something new.

STAR WARS AND THE 75 WORLD SERIES

I recently re-watched Ken Burns' documentary on baseball. If you haven't seen this series, you are nuts. Go rent it now and watch all 18 hours in a row. I've done it and it's awe inspiring.

But what I really wanted to comment on is one of the most important days in world history: October 21st, 1975.

To this day, Game 6 of the '75 World Series is echoed in all that remains good and optimistic in the planet's collective unconscious. Unfortunately, history is written by the winners and like Wounded Knee, most people don't know the story of this game. If you are one of those unfortunates, here's the story...

The Boston Red Sox are more than just a baseball franchise. They are a constant metaphor. Their most successful seasons are like a great performance of Hamlet. It's Greek tragedy and it's Baudelairean despair. I'm almost exclusively a National League fan. But I'll always feel connected with the Red Sox.

Having not won a championship in well over 50 years, the Red Sox found themselves in the 1975 World Series against the Cincinnati Reds. Now for me, the Reds represent all that is evil in baseball. In more recent times, they're the franchise owned by the openly racist Marge Schott. But at the time of the '75 World Series, they were the team of evil incarnate: Pete Rose.

Of course, this is only touching on the history that lead up to this battle between good and evil. But for time's sake, let's rush ahead to Game 6. The Reds lead the series at that point, three games to two.

Despite great pitching by Luis Tiant, the Red Sox found themselves down 6-3 in the eighth. With two outs and the series in the balance, in stepped pinch hitter Bernie Carbo. With two on, even I as a child could tell that he was swinging like minor leaguer. On his second strike, it seemed like his swing was a full 30 seconds after the ball crossed the plate. But like any great legend, he connected with two strikes and put one over the fence. The game was tied and eruption of the crowd still gives me goosebumps when I think of it.

The game would remain a tie until the 12th inning when catcher Carlton Fisk, sort of the Charles Grodin of baseball, took aim and knocked a ball just inches inside the foul post for a home run. It was a win for the Sox and the series was tied.

Now, I loved this team. I've said it before, I'm a true blue National League fan. The National League is like Marvel Comics to me and watching someone like the Cleveland Indians is like reading "Superman" or some crap. No thanx. The designated hitter is cheating just like the bat computer...

But I love the Red Sox and I especially loved those Red Sox. Who doesn't love watching El Tante's crazy pitch? Fred Lynn, MVP AND Rookie of the Year? Hello, how many others have done that? Motherfucking Bill Lee? He still gives the best interviews in the history of sports.

So I recently made the connection that my love for that team is like only one other thing I can think of... No, it's not my love for my girlfriend. That's a

In this way, I feel that they were similar to CAN and maybe NEU. Unlike Stereolab who mimic those groups, PEE followed the theory. Those bands took the simple rock structures of the time and created something unique. The quirkiest rhythm and strangest noise still usually wound up somewhere in the 4/4 beat.

The bass and drum arrangements, while in many ways structurally like progressive music and some '70s jazz, existed in it's own propelling atmosphere. It was then taken completely out of context by the vocal/guitar harmonizing.

As "musical" as it was, there were always tunes. With all that going on, PEE could always come up with a catchy tune in the middle of the pathologically complex songwriting.

PEE started catching on right when they split. They did three US tours (one with J Church) and put out two albums. Nobody got it. They may never be remembered. The records are still there, but the indie kids move through a bands corpse like piranhas in the Amazon. PEE was our TELEVISION. I don't know if that explains everything. But that's how I feel today...

I wrote this back in 1999. I still think it's a great shame that not more people discovered this great Bay Area band. Both of their CDs are still available as far as I can tell...

STAR WARS

AND THE 75 WORLD SERIES

love only shared by us. No, it's not my love for music, that's a specific desire to communicate.

That's right, it's my love for Star Wars. Yeah, yeah. It's so fucking trendy to talk about Star Wars. Yeah, yeah... "Empire" is better dude". Fuck you! Star Wars was first and if only for the element of surprise (who wasn't shocked the first time they saw it?) is the best. End of argument...

So, my love for the '75 Red Sox and Star Wars is a similar love. First of all, it's us against them. It's nothing political and confusing. It's not right wing or left wing. It's us (Red Sox / Rebel Forces) versus them (Reds / The Empire). Secondly, it's all illusion. I mean, none of it's real. It's not like I'll ever play major league baseball and have any genuine connection to the Red Sox. It's not like Star Wars is anything other than a movie (and a huge marketing conspiracy)...

But here's the ultimate realization of all my ponderings of Star Wars and the '75 Red Sox... THEY ARE THE SAME!!! There is no difference between Star Wars and Game Six of the '75 World Series. What most sports fans call the greatest game ever played is identical to what most sci-fi fans call the greatest film ever.

Luis Tiant is certainly Obiwan Kenobi. He stood up to evil and rallied the troops. He was "dead" by the eight inning. But in his death, the Red Sox only became stronger, more powerful than Pete Rose (Vader) could have imagined.

Bernie Carbo and his eighth inning homer? It happened about two thirds of the way through the game and while it was a great release it only left the Fenway faithful waiting for the final battle. His two out home run sailed out of the park like a Millenium Falcon with a rescued Princess.

In the extra innings, there were two threats. Fred Lynn hit a ball down the left field line that was caught followed by an incredible throw and play at the plate. It was Gold Leader's photon torpedoes just missing and hitting the surface (don't you think Lynn kinda looks like Wedge?).

Joe Morgan pounded a pitch deep right. Should have been a home run. But he was robbed by and incredible catch courtesy of Red Sox, Dwight Evans. That set up Carlton Fisk coming to the plate in the 12th just like Luke going down the trench after Han Solo surprises Vader and his cronies just as they are about to shit themselves in celebration.

Hell, even Vader admits, "The Force is strong with this one" not unlike Pete Rose saying to Fisk, "This is some kinda game".

Finally, the pay-off. The ultimate conclusion that seems so un-real that I can't believe that it wasn't a movie. Carlton Fisk hits that second pitch home run. But it wasn't just the home run that was important. He willed it to happen. He wanted it so bad that once he hit it, he unconsciously started gesturing in the direction that he wanted the ball to go. He jumped up and down. Anyone who saw it knew it was total magic. It was the Force. And like the Force, it took the will of every Red Sox fan watching to help get that ball fair.

The first time I saw Star Wars and watching Game 6 of the '75 World Series with my folks: possibly the two greatest moments of my life.

Sid Vicious was probably a good guy. He hated the Bromley Contingent. He loved Abba. He couldn't play bass to save his life.

Yet he's remembered for being the fuck up of the Sex Pistols who allegedly (though probably didn't) killed his girlfriend and then himself for no reason other than self-hatred. He was addicted to heroin. He thrived on being socially inept and obnoxious (swastika t-shirts, wasted disposition, loudmouth idiot) even if it meant revealing his own self-hatred and fragile inner self. He was an image and nothing deeper than that. He was the personification of style over substance.

"Born to lose" has always been a really stupid theme in punk. Even more so than that other pathetic loser, Johnny Thunders*, Sid Vicious encapsulated all of the worst, self-destructive clichés of rebel-without-a-cause, youth rebellion. These clichés, for many insiders and outsiders to the "scene", became the archetype and definition of punk. This ignoring of the creativity and energy and freedom of the original punk scene is far more offensive than all the swastika t-shirts. It's revisionist history.

To say that Sid Vicious was an accurate representation of the punk movement ('76 to '80, and that's being generous) is to deny the creative and productive elements of punk. The creativity and imagination of Patti Smith, Richard Hell, Television, The Ramones, The Modern Lovers, Sniffin' Glue, Siouxsie And The Banshees, The Clash, and everything the Sex Pistols did before coming to America was more than just a caustic reaction to the world. It was never as simple as a bunch of rebels without a cause. In the states it was an inevitable break from years of ennui and restlessness created by the stagnant fallout of the '60s, which evolved into '70s self-indulgence. It was an attempt at finding a different path once explored by the beats and confused by the mainstream co-opting of the counter-culture (even the most radical elements

punk's martyr. The real martyrs are the people who were left high and dry in the wake of the Sex Pistols implosion. For a long time, Johnny Rotten was punk's martyr. His career collapsed in an effort of pure integrity to destroy the punk myth when he followed up his work with the Sex Pistols with the adventurousness of the first few Pil records. He could have easily have started up a new band that sounded like all the other bands we now associate with the '77 sound. But instead, he took a step that both expanded the boundaries AND said, "Fuck you to all the second and third generation poseurs and Pistols wannabes."

Punk rock as a media sensation and as an event in pop music history died with the Sex Pistols at Winterland. It would be pretty hard to deny that Sid's drug addiction and general self-destruction was a major part of the band's collapse. The story of the Sex Pistols U.S tour (the conflicts with Malcolm McLaren, the route of the tour, the estrangement of band members) is ancient history. But with the ninth, tenth, or billionth version of punk happening all around us, I can only hope that the creative elements of the first generation can become acknowledged as the continual fashion revival. But if history is any guide, I don't have my hopes up.

Punk rock and Sid Vicious: let's hear it for the pathetic, self-destructive losers and all of their half assed copycats. Fuck off!

* - I really love "LAMF" as well as "Never Mind The Bollocks". But Johnny Thunders is just another example of style over substance. He was more about drugs and good hair than he was about music. Perhaps that wasn't always the case. But his success only encouraged his self-destructive image and I challenge anyone to say it didn't severely affect his creative talent for the worse. He had to die for people to forget that 95% of his live performances were total shit and 100% of his post-"LAMF" recorded material was also shit.

THE PROFOUND (*Unfortunately*) AND LASTING (*Really unfortunately*) INFLUENCE OF SID VICIOUS IN PUNK ROCK

were tamed and marginalized by 1975). In England, it was a form of class war as much as it was a way of creating your own reality while living in massive poverty and unemployment.

This is also why there is never as big a contradiction as a punk rock kid in the U.S. obsessed with Sid Vicious. In America, punk rock was a movement of the middle class and the upper middle class. This is why it spread to the suburbs and not to the streets. Punk rock in England was from the streets and was a reaction to the poverty and class boundaries as much as it was a reaction to society as a whole. This isn't to say that those bands can't be appreciated in the States for more than their music. Of course, their music can be appreciated like any other great musical gesture that affects the culture (Velvets, Albert Ayler, MC5, Black Sabbath to the Spice Girls, Culture Club, Radiohead) in its context. But have you ever seen a kid walking around with a leather jacket, jeans, a dog collar and spiky hair being drunk and obnoxious in front of the 7-11 and wondered, "how is this guy's attitude any different from that of the drunk jock at the frat kegger?" Well, he's not. He's just borrowing someone else's image.

But what really bothers me the most about the fascination with Sid Vicious is that he was, in as many ways as not, a creation of the media. But he was more than happy to do exactly what the media wanted and expected him to do. He was a tool for the media to create its own sellable (in terms of copy) version of punk. When the press dealt with punk, they were never interested in the issues and the circumstances that the movement grew out of (what's new?). It was all vaudeville and circus. Punks are obnoxious. They spit. They're violent. They look funny. They're totally marginalized.

Sid Vicious really did exemplify this image. Not only was he used as an example, but he began to believe his own press. He became as big a phony, wasted loser as any member of the Eagles or Def Leppard.

Like most of you, I'm a little too young to have been around for punk. My only real recollections as a kid was reading an article about the Sex Pistols when they were on the cover of High Times and them being on Good Morning America (or something of the sort) and maybe something in Cream or Hit Parader. This only makes it more confusing to me as to how Sid Vicious became



THE FUCKING CHAMPS HAVE STARTED THEIR OWN FUCKING GENRE

I love the Fucking Champs. I love the guys in the band and I love the music they play. Hey, there's a sleeping metal head in all of us and he/she needs to be awoken. But I have to admit; I thought that what they did was on the periphery. To be a mostly instrumental metal band ("instrumental" if you will) is unique enough. To have no bass makes you even further out there in the concentric spirals of musical conformity. I never could have guessed that they would spawn an actual genre of music.

I guess we are reaching the new wave of metal and it's nothing that anyone could have predicted. Smart, self-aware, prog metal? How could this have happened? Where was metal heading?

Once the leap was made from heavy metal to speed metal, forces were set in motion that could only lead in one direction; Satan (and I mean that in a good way... sorta). All musical currents can usually follow some sort of genealogy and metal is no different from jazz or punk or avant-garde polka in that respect. It's not to hard to see how Venom paved the way for Slayer who paved the way for Carcass who paved the way for Morbid Angel who paved the way for Deicide who paved the way for Cradle of Filth. Shit, looking back on it, they look like battles in a long war. There's something really macho even about the progression from generation to generation. Everyone wants to be more and more extreme. What's the point?*

The Fucking Champs are smart guys. They read books and stuff. They watch "films" as well as "movies". These guys aren't your stereotypical metal heads. No "Heavy Metal Parking Lot" types in the lot. You can talk to them lucidly about subjects other than beer, metal and American pride without worrying about getting your ass kicked. Not your metal stereotype...

At first I thought bands like C Average were wannabe's and shockingly derivative. But now I'm thinking that there's a new reality for metal. It's nice to know that there is a serious alternative to the metal head stereotype without it being a joke band. It's nice to see a metal band and not feel like my life is at risk if they find out that I was on the math team in high school (sad but true). Now, I

ain't saying that they're all a bunch of geniuses. This ain't the hesher version of "Good Will Hunting". But they don't revel in the ignorance that a lot of traditional metal heads do.

I always thought it was random chance and musical Darwinism that prevented a more cerebral strain of metal from developing. My theory is partly proved true with this new scene. It was all just a matter of time.

I think a lot of critics (musical and social) have dogged metal because of its self-imposed limitations. Historically, metal bands were forced to work within a very narrow framework. This was largely due to their careerist ambitions as musicians. Metal bands are entertainers. There's never been much more to it. So, rather than take risks that might affect record sales and concert attendances, most bands have played it pretty safe. It's a lot easier to simply focus on what most metal heads thought of as progress (guitar solos and getting laid for the most part).

But after years of punk rock and indie rock, there is a new consciousness in metal. There is the idea that you can play whatever you want and not be concerned with commercial success. If you're playing metal strictly out of the love for metal, then aren't you just as much an artist as someone playing any other strain of independent music?

This lack of limitations as defined by commercial ambitions is probably the main reason for the new freedom in metal. There's no reason to feel intimidated by outside influences. How many metal heads are into Gary Numan and Kraftwerk? There was a time when you could get your ass kicked for admitting that you liked those bands to your metal buddies.

This new freedom and adventurousness in metal is epitomized by the Fucking Champs. They're in it for the music, man.

* - I'd like to qualify this by saying that I really liked Carcass and the first couple of Cradle of Filth records.

RISD BANDS DON'T ROCK

(I didn't think much about this when I wrote it. I was kind of surprised at how many people reacted to it. I don't get that much response one way or the other to my newsletters. I was kind of surprised about all the positive response. I guess it really touched on something... I know not what...)

Okay, here's where I'm going to start a fight. We're all friends here, right? Just stay with me for a moment...

For the longest time, I really didn't care about the new wave of ironic hardcore by bands like the Locust (who I actually quite like) and then Black Dice and now Total Shutdown. I didn't and still don't really like those bands. I thought what they were doing was really silly. But I never thought any of them took themselves seriously, so I never really cared. Besides, the few people that I've met from all of those bands are really quite nice. I always figured, "fair enough, they're nice to me and they probably don't care for J Church either..."

But now it's gone too far. The new wave of totally apathetic / grad school / poseur hardcore has become too much for me to stand. It all has to do with them crossing the line and insulting a musical form that I hold dearly.

I subscribe to the avant-garde newsgroup at Yahoo because I love hearing postings about Bill Dixon, Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, etc from people that worked with them if not from the artists themselves. I've never posted because I've never felt I've had anything to contribute. It's just a source of great free information. Avant-garde and free jazz... it's a musical scene that means something, if for no other reason than history. You're talking about the reclaiming of a music form specifically for the African-American community. It was creativity and activism that merged art and politics as equal footed aspects of "cultural" analysis. The very idea of going far beyond the rigid order of traditional jazz and music in general was an abstraction that had direct ramifications on the socio-political landscape of the late '60s and early '70s. If the music world is a microcosm of the world at large, then music constructs had to be questioned like any other one in society... and vice versa. It was counter-culture and DIY methods that pre-cursed Crass and the anarcho punk movement.

It fucking means something to me.

So when I saw a listing in the avant-garde newsgroup for Black Dice and Total Shutdown playing a gig in San Francisco, I was fucking pissed off. These little shits were trying to disguise the fact that they were just a bunch of punk kids who "outgrew" punk and thought that they were really clever if they made a bunch of noise (which is the one aspect of these bands that I do like. But free jazz isn't just what's on the surface) and called themselves "artists". But these fucks take all the pretensions and all the posing, all the bullshit that most people hate so much about the art world and offer no tangible reason to think that they've done something of character or of cultural significance. Art is a mirror and these bands reflect nothing. It's a pose.

Avant-garde and free jazz was inherently connected to black power. Just ask Bill Dixon or anyone from the Art Ensemble of Chicago or Archie Shepp. What do Black Dice and the bands like them have to do with black power? Could they ever do something as ideologically radical?

Now, I haven't cared that much about hardcore in some time. There are still bands out there that I like. But I don't care that much. Still, it makes me sad to think that bands like Black Dice could in anyway be the wave of the future. I like to think that they are an insignificant blip on the map of music history (like J Church, of course). They probably are. But I worry that they are the shape of things to come. It's a shame when that kind of cynicism is the only way to combat the un-imaginative status quo of '90s hardcore. There are still some people in that scene involved for the politics and "art" of it rather than the empty slogans and macho poses. Black Dice are, sadly, the logical extent of Sonic Youth's (another band I actually quite like) half ironic interest in hardcore punk. They are the kids that won't really commit to anything because they would rather laugh at it. Shit, Black Dice must be doing something because I haven't been worried about the "state of hardcore" in years.

Hopefully, this will all play itself out. Black Dice aren't gonna survive in the avant-garde world doing what they're doing. They'll have to change and that might be a good thing.

RANTS AND RAVES

IF DEATH COMES SO CHEAP, THE SAME GOES FOR LIFE

(Written September 13th)

Stating the obvious, it's been a surreal couple of days. Peter Jennings, who I've really grown to like, really hit the nail on the head when he described the WTC collapse as such. I still find it kind of mind boggling when I watch the re-runs.

It's especially strange because I really feel like I (and others) have been waiting for something like this to happen. I don't mean that we were looking forward to it or would in any way have wished for it to happen. But I've spoken to friends many times before about the subject of terrorism in America. Why doesn't it exist?

There have been active terrorist organizations in almost every other country. Left wing, right wing, religious cults (I include Christianity under that heading) and who knows what else, the one thing that most of them can agree on is that America is the big bully on the block and is the enemy of the world. I never could understand why they spent so much time blowing things up in their own countries when America was such a wide-open target. And the number one target, in my opinion, was the WTC with the offices of multi-nationals in it as well as the World Bank and its proximity to the Stock Exchange.

It's also so very symbolic. Knocking down those two towers was like saying, "Hey America, you may think you're big and strong. But we just knocked down your two biggest phallic symbols." Have you ever told a big macho skinhead that he was impotent?

So when it finally happened (I'm already talking like it was some event in a US History book), of course it's horrible and the loss of life is horrendous. But I can't say I didn't expect it. I know I wasn't alone feeling that way. I could be wrong, but propaganda by deed is the most powerful. I would be surprised if the WTC attack wasn't a precursor to a new age of terrorism in the US. Like the Oklahoma City bombings, it's proof that it can be done and it's proof that if you're willing to put your life on the line, it's virtually unstoppable.

This seems obvious to me and now I'm realizing what the real danger of a President like Bush is. Of course, Gore is also evil and would probably be just as anxious to please the American public's bloodlust and fragile ego ("We're #1!" "God bless America!" Fuck off!). But Bush is a special kind of stupid. Ultimately, all Presidents' are manipulated by other forces (Big business, the pentagon, the Knights of Malta, whatever.) But Bush is especially likely to do something really rash that could lead to a much more dangerous end. He's obviously flailing out there and has no idea what to do. Once he starts making real decisions as to what kind of revenge America seeks, he could start making a lot of big and extremely dangerous mistakes. Right wing, left wing, whatever: we may all be fearing for our lives.

Americans seem to think that they're Romans in the Coliseum and historically Bush isn't opposed to keeping the people happy with blood sports. If we start attacking Afghanistan or Pakistan or Florida for that matter it will be like the ultimate mixture of Bread & Circuses with reality TV. I don't think that I'm being cynical in saying that ABC, NBC, FOX, etc. are secretly ecstatic. This must be better than sweeps week for them. Everyone is blinded with a sick and joyous rage against helpless targets. I wonder if anyone is practical enough to start thinking about how this is all going to affect the economy? Closing down the stock exchange for a week is one thing. But the President having unlimited access to all government financial resources is another. Do you trust Bush to spend our last bit of savings wisely? Do you remember what lead to the Great Depression? Are we heading for Class War or a right wing coup?

If you're a billionaire or a multi-millionaire, you're not gonna be too concerned about Bush draining all the money from social security. The rich won't be the ones homeless and starving. It's obvious whose interests are prioritized in the hunt for Bin Laden or whoever. It should also be obvious that nobody really cares about the interests of the middle class and lower in this country. The most laughable (and not much is really that laughable) is that tomorrow (Friday) Bush has declared a day of remembrance for the people that died in the attacks. He's urging everyone to take time to pray DURING THEIR LUNCHBREAKS. Yeah, all those people died but big business and corporate America aren't about to give anyone a day off to remember or contemplate these lost lives.

What's most appalling is how self-serving all the American politicians are. Listening to the Senators making those utterly quaint and self-serving speeches on Tuesday and then singing "God Bless America" was nauseating on so many levels. Thousands of people dead is now a future campaign strategy. It says a lot that, when interviewed for ABC, players for the New York Giants seemed more lucid and sincere than any politician.

Now there's misinformation being circulated about the White House and Air Force One being targets of the attack. I don't think anyone believes it. It may be the White Houses biggest lie in the matter and they're already being a little coy about it. It's a smoke screen to avoid the real question. When Bush

claims that "cowards" did these terrorist attacks he doesn't want anyone asking the obvious. What's more cowardly: taking over a plane and flying it into a building or hiding in secret while the country that you're the president of is under attack? Shit, even JFK sat at his desk during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

God, it's so painful. I can take seeing the wreckage. I can take the relentless footage of planes hitting buildings. But I can't take hearing Bush's fucking voice anymore. I think the final straw was that live phone call with him and Pataki and Giuliani. It was so lame. Anyone who believes that it was a real exchange must also think "Days Of Our Lives" is a documentary.

But the propaganda machine in the media is in full blitz. We're bombarded by borderline racist comments about Muslims. We're bombarded by pathetic pro-Israeli editorials about how we should now understand how the Israeli's feel even though they are the occupational government. Is it any surprise that Palestinians were celebrating in the streets? At my most cynical, I'd say they were just as stupid as Americans. Frat boys and jock and other idiots were cheering while they drank in sports bars around the US while watching live footage of missiles hitting civilian targets in Iraq. What's worse?

Within the media itself there are different tiers and while I do respect people (who I may not essentially agree with) like Jennings who's had the decency to respectfully interview Palestinian and Arab leaders there are far more opportunists in their midst. Scumbags are everywhere hoping to capture THE human-interest story. I'm sick of seeing reporters talking to victims or the victims' families and just waiting for them to cry. "How will you feel if you find out she's dead?" "Would you be willing to trade your life for your dead brothers?" Or what about the reporter interviewing the surgeon after hours of work? "How does it feel to be a person whose job is to save lives be surrounded by so much death?" It's sickening.

And Ari Fleischer... For fuck's sake, it's become obvious to everyone that every time Bush opens his mouth, something stupid comes out. More and more, it's fallen to Fleischer to deliver information from the White House and now he's on TV relating some human-interest story on how "touched" the President was when he visited victims in a hospital. God knows Bush wasn't able to convey any emotion as complex as that during any of his public addresses. But does Fleischer have to refer to him as if he were the Great Oz? He and the impotent Colin Powell are definitely trying to make the most out of the utterly empty statements Bush has made.

Of course most people I know, and I'm guessing just about everyone who reads this, isn't your "average American". They're not the doe eyed patriots that can't believe that any civilized people could hate America with such intensity. This attack might be a real crisis in faith for middle America. They've believed in America for so long and without any logical reason, that once they start questioning their belief systems and analyze WHY they have that belief system, their lives could start unraveling.

But my friends and me are in an odd situation. Hey, I don't like Bin Laden or the Taliban (assuming that's who's behind this... we may never know). But I don't like Southern Baptists either. All religions are kind of the same to me. I don't like the Afghani system of government, obviously. But I'd be hard pressed to find any tolerable government amongst the nations condemning them. Putin and Bush criticizing a nation for harboring terrorists? It's absurd. I certainly have no feelings for the Christian proselytizers who are currently under arrest and probably shitting bricks in Afghanistan. They're all vicious. There are no "sides" worth siding with.

And what can you say about an attack on the Pentagon? I can honestly say that I've been hard pressed to find any emotional connection to that attack. It's the seat of American militarism. Next to the World Bank, it's about as evil as can be. I'm no pacifist. But I certainly don't like seeing people die. But I really can't relate to any remorse over an attack there and I get the impression that more and more people feel the same. Even the news media isn't reporting the Pentagon attack with the same concern as with the WTC attack. It's awful to feel indifferent to death and destruction. But is it any different than the death and the destruction that goes on around the world and is almost entirely ignored by Americans? I know that this is gonna sound really trite, but maybe this is all Karma for our indifference towards all the people killed because of American business interests around the world. Too bad I don't believe in Karma...

Anyway, I'm turning off my television. I can't stand it anymore. I don't like being manipulated and I know I can't resist this level of propaganda. As much as I hate to say it, it's become boring.

STANDING OUT IN PALESTINE LIGHTING THE FUSE...

(Written early 2001)

While if I lived in Palestine, I doubt I could bring myself to vote for Barak or Sharon just like I couldn't bring myself to vote for Gore or Bush, I can't help but feel a little sickened by the recent elections. It's strange. But when wasn't violence inevitable?

Now every liberal or, at the least, Clinton supporter in the news is going

on and on about how the Palestinians blew it and how Barak was some great savior who was their only chance for peace. Like Barak was a man with great vision eclipsing even Rabin. It's sick. It's like telling South Africans during Apartheid that they should negotiate with the ruling government because it's in their own best interest. Well, justice is as important as peace and sometimes you need to strive for one to later get the other.

I'm certainly no fan of Arafat. I think if you analyze Palestine from a class perspective, you'll find him to be on the same side as Sharon. But in the interests of the Palestinian people, how can people be so clouded by the issues? For all the talk of genocide in Kosovo at the hands of the Serbs, how is it any different than the Israeli treatment of Palestine? Surely, parallels in terms of treachery can be made between Milosovich and Begin.

I don't know. It's Palestine and as we head towards what might very well be World War III, I can't help but keep humming the words from "Tommy Gun" by the Clash; "I can see it's kill or be killed. A nation of destiny has got to be fulfilled. Whatever you want, you're gonna get it."

25 YEARS SINCE VIETNAM

(Written a couple of years ago)

Do you remember Vietnam? Some vague recollection? That's what it's like for me. I was in the first grade when it ended. So for me, the tumultuousness of the times is more encapsulated by my parents divorce. Certainly more-so than any distant third party voyeurism that seems to be the subtext to any contemporary American analysis of the war.

But I guess that's America. We lost the war. We were the losers. In the midst of being the only surviving super power (as irrelevant as that is in this global economy), how does America transcend losing its last real war (known there as the American War) to such a small country as Vietnam? It's like when someone gets caught in a lie. America is wrong so it reacts with irrational anger.

It's funny to me, because although I'm not Vietnamese, there have been times in my life when the war has had a direct affect on my life. I remember moving to Texas in the third grade and having to deal with racist white kids who thought we were boat people.

A few weeks ago, some crazy homeless vet guy started yelling at me on the street. He was yelling all this crazy shit about "gooks" and stuff and obviously aiming it at me. I don't know. At first I was angry. Then it seemed really funny to me. The fact that this guy is fucked up was directly related to the United States losing the war. Would you hear about post-traumatic stress syndrome among the vets if America had won the war? This guy was a walking hypocrisy. So I started yelling at the guy. "You are a loser. America lost the war in Vietnam. America was the loser. That makes you a big LOSER!"

Anyway, I saw the film "Regret To Inform" when it was in the theaters a while back (it's now out on video). It's a documentary following one widow's trek back to Vietnam to find the spot where her husband was killed. Along the way, she interviews other women from both sides all of whom lost their husbands during (or as a result of) the American War. The stories are all horrific, but you can't help but take sides even in a film like this. The film unwittingly contrasts the loss of a husband with the loss of an entire family. It's all very sad. But it was a war. The greatest injustice is the dangers that continue to exist for the victors. Twenty five years later and people are still losing limbs.

I suppose the most infuriating side to all this (for me) is the continued criminalization of the Vietnamese. Why can't America look back and admit that it was a mistake? Japan lost World War II and now denounces the government that led them into that war. Obviously Germany does the same. Why can't America do the same for the war in Vietnam? Do Americans need to die on US soil for acknowledgement of a loss?

I guess what this all leads to is a new interest in the war. A new book is coming out edited by Christopher Riley and Douglas Niven. I don't know the title. But it's a collection of war photos from the Vietcong's perspective taken by Vietnamese. I'm pretty excited about it. Maybe one day someone will do a documentary strictly talking to the Vietnamese about their remembrances of the war. Now that would be a great P.O.V.

OLD FUCKERS

(Written this past Summer)

Am I the only person waiting to throw a party when Ronald Reagan dies? God, why won't he just go! When he was President, I had doubts about him surviving his tenure much less into the new millennium.

It's so pathetic to think that many of the hardcore punker kids in California of the early '80s who were writing all those songs about hating Reagan are now yuppies and fuckin' suits feeling sorry for the old clown.

I find it really disturbing that people are showing so much concern for his well-being. "Oh, he's just a fragile little old man!" Like being old absolves him of what he did to this planet. He was a real fucker during his entire political career. I'm not some super-vindictive person. But I'll be glad to see him shoved off of this mortal coil.

What is it about getting old that absolves you of all crimes? I've been fascinated with this quotient ever since Nixon's death. I mean, even liberals were singing his praises when he died. Are we all really that afraid of our own mortality? Are we so un-easy with our own thought processes that we can't call a spade a spade on his deathbed?

Shit, I couldn't believe that Robert DeNiro and Scorsese would escort Elia Kazan on stage a few years back at the Academy Awards. I mean, where are people's principles? Hey, they're not letting Pete Rose into the Hall of Fame because of what he did to baseball. They sure shouldn't give Kazan a lifetime achievement award. The Blacklist was certainly a part of his life... He made his choice at the crossroads.

At least Nixon and Kazan had to go through hell. They were largely recognized as fuckers and in many ways they paid the price.

That makes the Reagan thing all the more frustrating to me. It pains me to think that Reagan will be known in the history books as a great American hero. It's bad enough that Americans give a shit about Presidents and think that they are somehow intellectually and ethically above the average citizen. But to think of someone like Reagan as a hero just shows what sheep we all are.

It just blows my mind to think that he "got away with it". He's like Dudley Smith in "L.A. Confidential". He's the guy that gets away with it. My only hope is that in a hundred years, archaeologists will look back at America in the '80s and beyond and be able to compare it to the final years of the Roman Empire. I'm hoping...

He's a sad, old man and when he dies I'll be the first with a celebratory cheer.

MILESTONES

JERRY WICK IS DEAD

I can't even explain to you how sick it made me feel when I found out that Jerry Wick was dead. I felt completely gutted when I read the news. I'm not even sure if I can completely explain to you why he was so important to me. But I'll try.

Jerry Wick was the singer and rhythm guitarist of the punk band Gaunt. They put out some fantastic, underrated records in the '90s on Thrill Jockey, AmRep and Warner Brothers. Their sound was fierce and in your face. But it was also catchy as hell without sounding contrived. Few bands can do that. Superchunk do it when they're at their best. Archers Of Loaf did it on the first record. Even the Clean did it.

But the band never really got a break. They were never appreciated enough by the pop punk crowds, who couldn't transcend Wick's smart and often biting lyrics. I love Steely Dan and the Smiths. I know that Gaunt at least liked the Smiths. Now imagine an entire repertoire of lyrics based around "Reelin' In The Years" and "You've Got Everything Now".

The band put out great album after great album but always missing that breakthrough success they deserved. Maybe it took the wind out of them. I don't know. Maybe it was the failure of their major label debut. But the band split and it was music's loss.

Jerry was killed on the morning of January 9th. Apparently, he was riding his bike home when he was hit by a hit and run driver. People are now saying that the driver eventually turned himself in. I don't really know any more details. But I guess I don't really need to.

Okay, you would be guessing wrong if you gathered from that intro that Jerry and I were these great friends. We weren't. I like to think we were friends. But, really, we were associates of mutual respect in the complex world of inter-communication in the undergrounds music scene. We had a few good times hanging out and I was always happy to see him. But that was the extent of our friendship.

No, but I was always cheering for Gaunt and Jerry from my part of the country. I used to think of Gaunt as comrades, fighting the same good fight that J Church did. We were both defiant and unrepentant in our obscurity. In my worst moments with the band, I felt that Gaunt had probably gone through the same thing at one point or another. I could imagine Jerry's reaction and how he could persevere.

I remember when Gaunt released full length LPs on Thrill Jockey and AmRep on what seemed like the same day. To a lot of people, that would seem like a big screw up. But I could relate and I could understand the many reasons why that could happen. I could also imagine Jerry throwing his hands in the air and not being too concerned about it. As long as the music was documented and out there, that's half the battle.

I don't know. That may seem kind of ridiculous. My connection to Gaunt may be a connection to a fictitious Gaunt I created in my mind. Maybe they didn't feel as misunderstood as I feel some times (yeah, yeah, yeah... cry me a river...). But I always would look to them for a weird kind of inspiration that comes from knowing you may be going nowhere. But it's still worth the going.

Gaunt never got what they deserved. Jerry never got the recognition he deserved. He was fucking brilliant and today I'm crushed.

MORE MILESTONES

MARGARET

I don't want to really dwell on this. I just found out my friend Margaret Kilgallen passed away the other day. I'm still in a bit of shock. Margaret was my age and is probably best known for her paintings, which have been shown in galleries everywhere. Along with her partner, Barry McGee, she had a highly celebrated show last year at LA's Armand Hammer Museum down in Westwood.

I really only knew her through Barry and his sister, Kim, who was our old roadie. The three of them made up a certain team of people that I always admired. Some of the nicest people you'll ever meet. I truly mean that.

Her paintings are a great testament to her life and ability to communicate ideas through her personality. Often painted with spray paint or house paint, she also often used random materials as canvases. There was a definite lo-fi feel, which along with her use of striking and often abstract female images, and arcane typography communicated a demented joyful feeling. The joy was in conflict with the content of the art. There was a challenge being made in her art. But the challenge was inadvertent and in turn the art became truly revealing.

The timing of her death is unbelievably tragic. Just a month ago she had graduated from Stanford and had given birth to her and Barry's first child. I guess there's really nothing else for me to say.

COMMODITY FETISHISM AND THE D.I.Y. ETHIC

Whenever discussing drugs and drug addiction, there's always someone in my social circle that mentions how some people have addictive personalities and others don't. Me, I can't imagine not having an addictive personality. It's part of my value system. I just don't see how you can completely embrace life without having an addictive personality. It's the vilification of drugs that taint the image of the drug addict. Sure, you can blame the drugs. But can you really blame the addiction? I try to avoid using terms like "human nature". But I don't know much else that's as instinctive as addiction.

Now, I'm not a drug addict. I'm not an alcoholic. I'm not even a sex addict. While I've indulged in all of the above for entirely instinctive reasons, it's rarely reached a level where I could even consider it addiction (in all fairness, I know a lot of people that would disagree and I've been called an alcoholic more than once in my life). But my relationship to those so-called vices is not far removed from the intentions of an addict. Perhaps in the beginning it was the same clichés that led me there. Curiosity and nerves were the two guides I followed through most of my youth. But as time wore on, sex, drugs and alcohol became a more mature part of my life. It was a way to fill voids inside and a way to conquer loneliness. I know that sounds really existential or something. But the inability to connect on the most basic levels with my peers was my reality.

I spent a lot of the '80s feeling completely isolated and out of sync with the world. I didn't understand the world. I was born in the '60s and grew up in the '70s. I didn't understand what the '80s were all about. I couldn't relate to kids around me. I couldn't understand the music that was popular (I still don't which is why I can't relate to most of the pseudo new wave of today's underground). I couldn't understand television. I couldn't figure out what was funny about sitcoms or most television. I couldn't understand how Ronald Reagan could be president. It was the first time in my life that I truly felt like an outcast.

Even the punk rock kids I knew were secretly conservative, rich kids. In Hawaii, the punk scene was 95% suburban military brats. It seemed crazy to me that they could be so patriotic while wearing an MDC t-shirt. My connection to fanzines like Maximum Rock N Roll sorta steered me in the right direction and gave me some hope. So, I decided I needed to find new ways of filling the void.

I'm not a competitive person. I've really never been ambitious. Sometimes I say I am just to be taken seriously. But, really, I do what I do and I know why I do it. I'm not too concerned about impressing anyone and I don't really care about my station in life. My obsession with punk rock was in a lot of ways against my nature.

VICTOR WONG

At the end of September, Victor Keung Wong died. He was 74. Most people know him from his acting in "The Joy Luck Club" or "The Last Emperor". But I'll always remember him from Wayne Wang's "Dim Sum". That's one of my favorite movies of all time and is certainly (along with "Chan Is Missing") one of my favorite films about San Francisco. It really captures a part of that city that only living there can expose you to.

What a lot of people don't realize is that Wong was also an artist and not just some colorful character. Born and raised in San Francisco, he attended the Art Institute and studied with Mark Rothko. In the '50s and '60s he became a mainstay in the Beat community and was friends with Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Jack Kerouac and appeared in his book, "Big Sun".

Having appeared in 28 films from 1984 to 1998, he retired from acting after suffering from two strokes in two consecutive years. He spent his last two years painting and making computer art. Earlier this year he had a show at B. Sakato Garo in Sacramento.

It's a shame that there really hasn't been much coverage in his passing. I mean, he was no big star. But I thought he was great and for "Dim Sum" alone, he had a bigger impact on my life than almost any Academy Award winner I can think of.

COMMODITY FETISHISM AND THE D.I.Y. ETHIC

I've always been a "collector" of sorts. Not the "red vinyl, first edition, mint condition" type of collector. If you know me, you'll know that most of my records are pretty well played and the covers are usually well worn. So, I'm a bad collector. But it's a compulsion that engulfs a huge part of my life.

Now, I'm not trying to belittle the struggle of people suffering through drug addiction. I'm just trying to understand the nature of addiction itself. There are definite similarities in the exponential nature of my drinking and the way I peruse record stores on a daily basis no matter what city I'm in. But it's the process that's important to me and I think that is also what fuels a lot of D.I.Y. culture these days. It's a clean switch. It can be religion without the dogma. It's Zen atheism. If AA says you can switch religion for alcoholism, why can't you substitute D.I.Y. culture for alcoholism? Isn't it all addiction?

I'll be the first to admit that there are bands out there that I support even though I may not really relate to their music. I'm not necessarily talking about political bands (I always thought it was weird that so many people used to say they liked the politics of Crass but not the music. I really like their records!) or anything like that. There are some bands that I'm just glad that they're around. They serve a purpose and offer a musical counterpoint to something / anything. I think that is more important than a bunch of bands playing a musical style I like, each band identical to the other. If you've ever bought a record just because you wanted to and not because you necessarily thought you would ever listen to it, you know what I mean. I do it all the time.

I think it's the same mentality for bands. Why go on the road for months playing to 20 people (or less) a night? Hey, there are thousands of bands that do it. Why bother to play a gig where only 3 people actually showed up? If you're a religious person, then I guess you could argue that you are celebrating some sort of gift from above. If not, you're playing to satisfy some inner longing. Those gigs are like signing a pact with your inner demons. Either that or you've got nothing better to do (and who doesn't have better things to do!?!).

It's addiction and it's pathology and it's what fuels the underground in these conservative times. It's the mindset that is constantly veering dangerously close to dogma. It can become a cult. But I always felt that the main difference between a cult and a collective was hierarchy. In many cases, it's the only difference.

D.I.Y. culture is an addiction. All record collecting can be an addiction. Records, fanzines and performances are all intellectual fetish items in their own way.

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“Arbor Vitae” LP / CD (Rugger Bugger - UK, Honey Bear Records)
“Nostalgic For Nothing” 2xLP / CD (Broken Rekids)
“Analysis, Yes, Very Nice” 10” / CDEP (Allied Recordings)
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Here's an interview I did in two parts with Joseph Porta. All the questions this time around were for an article I've been writing on The Mob. The first draft of the actual article was in Maximum Rock N Roll #218. The complete version will be in my upcoming book on anarcho punk.

Lance - Basic banalities: How did the band start? How did you meet? Was the line-up on all the records the original line-up? What previous bands had you been in?

Joseph - I started the band when The Mob split up. I'd started writing songs, but playing them with The Mob was obviously not going to work, as Mark was the man everyone wanted to listen to. The original line-up only recorded one LP and three singles - there have been an awful lot of people in the ranks over the years, and I'm the only one who's been here since the start. Before Blyth I was in The Mob, and before that Zounds. Apart from that there were a whole lot of other bands no one would have heard of.

Lance - How much overlapping was there with Zounds and the Mob? Were there many gigs where you had to do double duty? Was there ever any

friction over you
being in two busy
bands?

Joseph - There were a few gigs where I played in both, as I was on-off stand in for The Mob for a year or so. It was never a problem.

Lance - What made you select the name,

the Mob? What music were you listening to at the time? Was there ever a time when you were just a straightforward punk / garage band?

Joseph - By the time I started playing with them, the band had been around for about three years. I had nothing to do with either the name or any of the writing - I was just the drummer. I'm not sure what you mean by a straightforward punk/garage band. You couldn't get much more straightforward than The Mob - Mark wasn't exactly a busy guitarist, and a lot of his songs only had two chords. I think Curtis' bass playing was a big feature in the band's sound. He was pretty good. Without him the music would have been featureless.

Lance - Where was the band located? What other bands were from your area? Do you remember which bands you played the most with back then?

Joseph - Initially we were all from Somerset, but the year or so we were based in Hackney in London was the period that most people would remember. We were playing with a lot of the Crass label bands - Poison Girls, Dirt, Flux of Pink Indians and the like, but other bands that spring to mind are Blood and Roses, Brigandage, The Apostles, Flowers in the Dustbin and about a million others.

Lance - What led to the first single? What made you want to release it on your own? How many did you make?

Joseph - I wasn't around then, so I can't really say much about that. I think they made 500, but it was pretty dreadful. The best thing about it is Graham Fallows, the original drummer. He was absolutely the best - he started playing when he was about 6. Listen to the way he plays Witch Hunt. I always hated trying to play that song, because without him it just sounded limp-wristed.

Lance - How did you hook up with Crass people? Did they approach you or did you play together? What was your opinion of them before you worked together?

Joseph - Just before I joined Zounds, they were touring with The Mob and The Androids of Mu in an old bus. The tours were known as The Weird Tales, and the idea was that all the shows were free, and a collection was taken. Needless to say it was doomed to failure, as your average UK anarcho would rather spend money on cider.... The bands had all been support acts for Here & Now, who had started the whole thing up. One night they got a puncture somewhere out in Essex, and entirely by accident, some of Crass happened by and fixed it for them. They liked what the bands were doing and invited Zounds, and subsequently The Mob, to record for them.

Lance - How was recording "No Doves..." different from other recording experiences? What was it like working with the Crass folks?

Joseph - One thing about recording with Crass was the meticulous attention to detail. Penny was a great producer, but also liked to be in control, so bands were seldom at the mix, and you were apt to find your record coming out with unexpected overdubs of crying babies on them. I suppose the main difference was that working with Crass you weren't on so tight a budget as normal, and could take the necessary time over a project. I think they had shares in Southern Studio. I believe that some of their recordings took months.

Lance - What made you decide to work with All The Madmen instead? To what extent were you involved with the label? Was it mostly Rob and Sean or were there others involved? Who was Alistair?

Joseph - The label was set up by the band. Rob and Sean were nothing to do with it until after The Mob parted company. Crass had a policy of not doing more

than one record with any single band, and a friend put the money up for the LP. Alistair was the guy who took over running it from us when we got fed up.

Lance - What were some of the ideas behind the LP? In some ways, it's the most disaffected and alienated records of the entire anarchist / peace punk genre. How did you relate to the rest of the punk scene at the time?

Joseph - Personally I didn't have a lot to do with it. Mark wrote all the songs, so I can't really say much about that. There was a lot of rubbish being talked and sung by a lot of people at the time

Lance - How do you compare the LP to the "Ching" demo? How were the Mob received? How did you perceive your response from both the public and the music press?

Joseph - The LP is much better. "Ching" was recorded on a ghetto blaster in a rehearsal room in my house in Hackney, and sounds like it. The band were very well received by people, on account of Mark's bottomless charisma. Not much interest from the music press, as we were tarred by the Crass brush, but we were getting on fine without them.

Lance - When you first toured Europe (was it your only tour there?) it was back in '79. Did you have any records out back then? How was your response abroad?

Joseph - Did The Mob go to Europe in 1979? News to me, but then I wasn't in the band then. The first single came out round about then. I went to Belgium and Germany with them in 1980/81. The response was pretty much the same - people took a lot of speed, drank a lot and looked intense.

Lance - What were you trying to get across musically with the last single? "The Mirror Breaks" was pretty subdued but was also one of the most musically "pretty" things the band did. Was there any conscious decision to break away from punk rock?

Joseph - The Mob never tried consciously to sound like anything. Basically we just did what we could with what we had. Mark wasn't too fussed about the music, other than as a backing to the lyrics. I've never thought of that record as particularly pretty. I like it - which is certainly not true of all the records I've made but I don't think it's that different from any other Mob record.

Lance - What led to the split live LP with the Apostles or the split live tape with the Faction and D&V?

Joseph - Nothing really. Someone just thought it was a good idea, although we did try to get the live LP stopped, as the sound was so awful we thought it would just be a rip-off for people who bought it expecting something worthwhile. It just got bootlegged, and there was no way we could stop it.

Lance - Towards the later stages of the band, what was your relationship with the Crass scene and their bands like? Do you feel like there really was a movement happening? Do you feel like you were connected to something or was it all an illusion?

Joseph - I don't think there was much beyond a kind of fantasy. For me, any fond memories I have of that scene are very personal. It was so insular - how anyone can talk about an anarchist society that excludes anyone who doesn't have the right record collection is beyond me. There were a lot of sincere people, I don't deny it, but there was also a lot of hot air. Sure, we all did the same gigs and got interviewed by the same fanzines, but we were all just talking to each other.

What is the point in trying to change the people who are already the same as you? Yes, I felt very connected to something, and I loved it at the time, but looking back I can't quite see how it had any more real value than any other clique.

Lance - How do you reflect on the early '80s and the old anarchist scene? Do you feel it was all too naive? Do you still maintain a lot of those ideals? How do you feel that it affects music today?

Joseph - I refer the honorable member to my previous answer. Nowadays we don't play by the Anarchist's rules. They are too inflexible. One effect that scene has had on our music is that there are a lot of fossils who still think we owe it to them to sell records for NO MORE THAN 75P and to play pointless benefits for nothing. This is my livelihood, and it really pisses me off when they come in whinging about the door price, and then spend a fortune at the bar. Do they owe us a living...?

Lance - What led to the band splitting? Were there internal problems? Do you still keep in touch with any of the others?

Joseph - Mark got bored, and wanted to go off and live in a van somewhere. I haven't seen him for over 15 years. Curtis was in Blyth Power for three years, but no, we don't keep in touch

Lance - With the re-release of your music on CD and the number of old anarcho bands doing reunion gigs, is there any chance of a Mob reunion?

Joseph - Sure, if they pay me.

Lance - What kind of music were you listening to while you were playing with the Mob or Zounds? Were you listening to a lot of the music from your

THE MOB

peers or something else?

Joseph - Funnily enough I have hardly listened to music at all since I started playing it. About the only tape I recall having back then was Patti Smith's 'Horses' - which rules - and a Glenn Miller compilation. All my punk 7"s, which I'd assiduously collected over 1977-78 had long since been sold or stolen by then. I don't think I ever really listened to much of the Anarcho-punk stuff. The Adverts, Clash, 999, Alternative TV and the like were my idea of punk bands at the time. Lance - Do you have any memories of recording "Let The Tribe Increase"? I think it's still a great sounding record...

Joseph - It does have its moments. I remember we had trouble recording a scream for the start of Witch Hunt. We all tried to do a convincing one, but they all sounded pathetic, so the engineer mutated them into that funny wind noise. Roger was fun. That found its way on mainly due to a shortage of real songs. Five of us had a mike each and just talked bollocks over it. Spaceward was great. It's an old school in a tiny village in Cambridgeshire, miles from anywhere. Getting out of London for a week was a real plus.

Lance - When the band split, was there any bitterness? Were there any ill feelings towards Mark for quitting or whatever?

Joseph - Not really. There was some grief over the label, as the guy Mark wanted to run it was fucking things up, and I wanted it to be run by the chap who eventually took it over once most of its assets had been blown. I think The Mob had had its day - things were going really well, and if we'd wanted to cash in on it we probably could have. I think its best that it ended when it did.

Lance - How soon after did you form Blyth Power?

Joseph - Immediately.

Lance - Did you ever have the urge to do any lead singing with Zounds or the Mob?

Joseph - Not with Zounds. We did one of my songs with The Mob at the last few gigs, and I sang it, but it wasn't a good idea - people came to see Mark, not me.

Lance - Had you been in any band before the Mob or Zounds?

Joseph - My first band was back in Somerset - Valley Forge - it was a ghastly

punk band that played in local village halls. When I moved to London in 1979 I joined the first band with a vacancy, which was a Mod band called Attitudes. They taught me to play. I wasn't that keen on the music, but I just wanted a band, and they were the first ad I answered in Melody Maker. We did a dozen or so gigs, but rehearsing twice a week for a year with a disciplined group of musicians was really good for me.

Lance - The first time I ever heard the term "trainspotting", it was in reference to you. Is it still a passion of yours? Were you doing it all through the time you were playing with the Mob and such?

Joseph - I stopped between 1977 and 1983, but got back into it. Now I still practice it whenever possible, and have a growing collection of photographs of the Deutches Bundesbahn as well.

Lance - Do you know anyone else from other bands or from the anarcho scene that were into trainspotting? Sorry about my fascination. But there's really nothing like it in the states.

Joseph - Our name is legion, for we are many. Captain Sensible is one - his record label 'Deltic' is named after a type of diesel loco. Both the bassist and guitarist in Blyth are long-standing practitioners, and we're always meeting people at gigs who dabble.

Lance - What lead you to start writing songs about trainspotting?

Joseph - I've not written that many about it really. The railway just crops up now and again because it's something I love so much. Have you checked out all the lyrics on the website? Trains are few and far between.

Lance - Seems like there have been a few veterans of the anarcho days that have passed through membership of Blyth Power (The Mob, Lost Cherees, etc.). Who were some of the past members who were previously in other anarcho bands? Do you think that Blyth Power is in any way a reaction to that whole scene?

Joseph - I think Sian and Curtis were the only two. You're right though, there was a certain amount of re-action against the scene in the early days of Blyth. That's probably why no one liked us.



Lack Of Knowledge was one of the younger bands of the anarcho punk scene of the late '70s. They had begun playing together at the ages of 12 and 13. Tony had come from a series of bedroom bands while Danny was in the band Headache. Tony currently plays bass with the Buzzcocks and Alternative TV not to mention his solo project, Airport.

Lance - Stupid first question... How did the band start? I get the impression that maybe you knew each other from school. Had any of you been in any other bands before Lack Of Knowledge?

Lack Of Knowledge - We all grew up in a very small geographical area, and we met through friends and acquaintances. Tony met Bernard (Original drummer) from a school friend, Bernie was Danny's brother. Tony & Paul were at school together and Chiefy was at school with Tony's girlfriend, Karen (later to become the bassist of LOK), 2nd drummer Philip we met through live LOK shows. Danny had been in a band called 'Headache', who made one single. Everybody else had just mucked around with bedroom bands.

scene?

Danny - In hindsight, after listening back to LOK records recently, I have come to the conclusion that I was depressed.

Tony - So was I.

Lance - Was there any kind of social scene with the bands? I think a lot of people get the idea that the old scene was pretty dreary and serious all the time. You even say that you were all sorta depressed. But weren't there some good times? Was there anything fun about it?

Lack Of Knowledge - Yeah we were friendly with a lot of the other bands, particularly OMEGA TRIBE, who we used to go to the pub with and have the odd game of football as well as playing gigs with them. DIRT, who were from the same area as us, HAGAR THE WOMB were friends. Basically most of the bands would have been found at each others gigs, so maybe you could call it a social scene, albeit a very insular one!! When did we say we were depressed?? we had the time of our lives! Sort of!!

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

Lance - What got you into punk rock? How did you first come across it? How did you get into the anarchist / peace punk scene?

Danny - The first time I heard of punk rock was from a review of the Sex Pistols from 1976 in the 'Melody Maker' magazine in England.

Tony - Got into Punk around early 77 for Sex Pistols, the so-called 'Anarcho/ Peace punk' scene would have been around late '78 when I heard a demo tape of Crass for the first time, I guess.

Lance - Was there ever a time when Lack Of Knowledge was simply a straightforward punk / garage band? How did the band become part of the "Crass" scene? How did you first meet the folks from Crass? What lead to you recording that first single for Crass?

Lack Of Knowledge - A garage band - No! Although, we did rehearse in a garage at one time. We met Crass in the record store called Small Wonder in North East London and became friendly with them, going to see them live etc. and from there we developed a working relationship with them which evolved in the single and LP. We took them a copy of our first, home made single and they liked it enough to want to release our next one.

Lance - How different was that recording from the original concept you had for the group? In hindsight, how do you reflect on that record?

Lack Of Knowledge - We were never an out and out political group, to the extent of hating Mrs. Thatcher in every song! But, the finished single on Crass was a slight departure from what we were doing, but still within the framework of what we were capable and prepared to do. It was just another facet of what we were about. We deliberately set out to make the record as it appeared; it was how we envisaged it.

Lance - What were Lack Of Knowledge gigs like back then? Did you tour much? What was the focus of the band?

Lack Of Knowledge - 20 people. All ignoring us! That's what it was like back then. Although that's what all 'anarcho punk' gigs were like back then! Did we tour much? - You must be joking. The focus of the band was not being beaten up on the way home from a show!

Lance - You say that there were never many people at the gigs and that you really didn't tour. What was it that kept you interest in playing gigs? What kept you going as a performing band? Joking or not, do you really feel that there were times when the band might have been "beaten up on the way home from a show"?

Lack Of Knowledge - There was no reason why we kept playing shows. It's what groups do! The most people we played to was at the ZIGZAG CLUB Xmas gig 1982 where virtually every 'anarcho' band in existence played. Audience was about 2000. Every other gig we did was between 30 and maybe 200, at a stretch. Out of the 60 or 70 gigs we played, probably the first 20 or 30 were organized entirely by ourselves, and later when we started playing established clubs, we booked them ourselves, we had no agent. We had no reason for continuing, we also had no reason for stopping, so that's why we did it. Beaten up? - I don't think so.

Lance - Your style was different from most other bands associated with the anarcho scene. Your lyrics were much more atmospheric as well as metaphoric. The music was almost gothic at times. What do you feel you were trying to get across with the band?

Danny - Lyrically, I had no set idea of the lyrical content to a lack of knowledge song. I just set out to be as individual as possible. The idea being that it would not sound like anyone else.

Lance - The over-all feel of the band was certainly pretty somber. Even the graphic imagery on the records was quite bleak. Do you feel that the band was a mirror of England at the time or were you trying to express something darker? Do you feel like you had any connection with the gothic

Lance - What was the story with "The Uninvited"? Had you already known the Crass folks at that point? What made you want to release that on your own?

Lack Of Knowledge - 'The Uninvited' (100 copies still in the cupboard, \$4.00 post and packing) was the first record we put out. Entirely done by us from start to finish. We put the records in the sleeves, the lot! Yeah we knew Crass already, by then. We hadn't approached them about making a record until after we did this 7", which I think gave us a better understanding of how records are made and manufactured etc. It was a good education. To be recommended to all the soft groups out there who complain about everything to do with their record companies. There was no question of us making a record at that point with a record company, as there was none remotely interested. CoCo the clown hadn't started one yet!

Lance - How would you define your connection to anarchism or whatever ideology you prescribe to? In your imagery especially on the first single, it reminds me a lot of the Situationists and what they called psychogeographic maps. What did those graphics represent?

Lack Of Knowledge - The difference between LOK and other 'Anarchist' groups was that the others all set out to be 'Anarchist groups' and LOK just existed, and were involved by accident rather than design. Lyrically, LOK included a lot of references to 'Horror' as well as political themes.

Lance - Where was the band based?

Lack Of Knowledge - Danny, Tony, Paul, Chiefy, Bernard were all from Edmonton, which is located in North East London. Karen was from Ponders End and Philip from the neighboring Enfield.

Lance - A lot of people reflect bitterly on the old peace punk scene. Other people feel like they're still in the thick of it. How do you reflect on it?

Tony - What you mean there still is one!!!

Lance - Lately, you've done a few reunion gigs. What was the inspiration there? Do you still feel connected to the ideas and concepts behind Lack Of Knowledge?

Lack Of Knowledge - The inspiration was that we were bullied into doing it by an American record executive. No, we had to rehearse for the CD so we thought we'd do a show at the same time.

Lance - You've also been playing music with the Buzzcocks and lately Alternative Television. How did that come together? Do you feel like there is any connection between the Buzzcocks and Lack Of Knowledge or is it just personal taste?

Tony - No

Lance - Do you have a complete discography of Lack Of Knowledge? I know that there is the LP and the first 7". But I also found a single called "Ritual" which has no information on it, so I'm not even totally sure that it's you.

Lack Of Knowledge - 'THE UNINVITED' b/w 'RITUAL' 1982 Vinyl Only (Own label)

'GREY' EP 1983 Vinyl Only (Crass Records)

'SIRENS ARE BACK' LP 1984 Vinyl Only (Corpus Christi/Crass)

'SENTINEL' EP 1985 Vinyl Only (Chainsaw)

'THE A SIDES' 2 LOK Tracks from Grey 1992 CD Only (Crass Records)

'AMERICANIZED' LOK Retrospective 2001 CD Only (Grand Theft Audio)

Lance - How do you reflect on "Sirens Are Back"? What other bands were around at the time that maybe you felt like you related to?

Lack Of Knowledge - In retrospect, the album sounds even less like anyone else than was previously imagined. It also represented the most uncommercial LOK material available for recording at that time.

Lance - What was "Sentinel" and why wasn't that on Crass/Corpus?

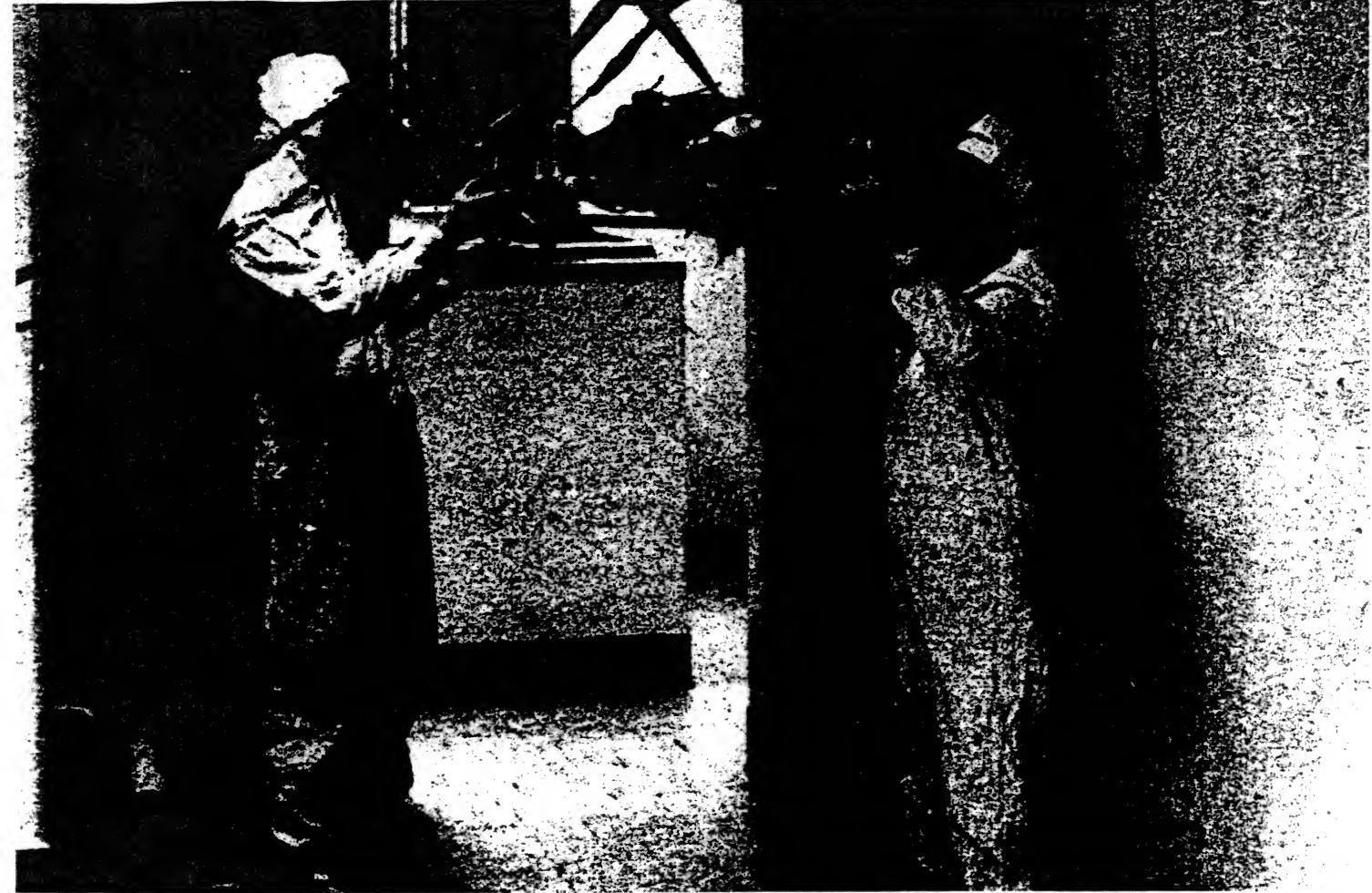
Lack Of Knowledge - Sentinel was a 4 track 12" single (voted single of the week in 'Sounds' UK weekly music paper!) released by a label called CHAINSAW as CORPUS CHRISTI had folded by then. Luckily for us, they folded before we had a chance to pay off our debt (don't remind John Loder!). The record was a new direction for the band as it was recorded by a new LOK line-up. It was to be the last record we put out.

Lance - What were the reactions of to your various releases in terms of public support and/or the music press?

Lack Of Knowledge - All LOK records, incredibly, received very favorable reviews; although English music journalists are not exactly noted for their discerning taste. LOK were not even a footnote in the history of recorded music, even in the UK, so it does seem incredible that someone in the USA should be remotely interested in what LOK did in the past. We will of course be touring in the US to promote the album. We have just been asked if we can let 'Disney' use a track for a forthcoming biopic of the life of Klaus Barbie; we of course have agreed.

Lance - Why exactly did the band split up? How many different line-ups did you have?

Lack Of Knowledge - 3 line ups



you think it had any lasting affect on the world or at least the music industry?

Lack Of Knowledge - 1) the anarcho scene had absolutely no connection with the music industry, so therefore doesn't really have any effect on it today. 2) We haven't suddenly become bankers after dissolving LOK, so yeah, we are somehow still 'practicing' those ideas. Some of the band are still involved occasionally with members of CRASS in one way or another (not all to do with music), so I guess that's another connection.

Lance - What are some of your favorite moments / memories from Lack Of Knowledge?

Lack Of Knowledge - a selection in no particular order;

- a) Carrying 1000 7" singles across London on public transport.
- b) Physically ejecting bands from the stage cos they played for too long before us.
- c) Early gigs in our town.
- d) Winston Smiths first live review
- e) Playing the Anarchy Centre in the LOK official dress code of grey shirts and black ties.
- f) Rehearsing in our first rehearsal room in the local youth club.

line up; a

'The Uninvited' / 1980-1982

Daniel Drummond / vocals, Tony Barber / guitar, Paul Stevens / bass, Chiefy / drums

line up ; b

'Grey' EP & 'Sirens' LP/ 1982-1984

Daniel Drummond / vocals, Tony Barber / guitar, Paul Stevens / bass, Philip Barker / drums

line up ; c

'Sentinel' 12" EP/1984-1986

Daniel Drummond / vocals, Tony Barber / guitar, Karen Gower / bass. Philip Barker / drums

The group just stopped, we didn't split up. We had reached the end of the LOK line. We had nowhere else to go, unless we radically changed the way we did stuff. Also by 1986, the scene in UK had become absolutely shit. Hence the Smiths.

Lance - Not just the band, but in the entire "anarcho scene", do you today have any connection to those ideas? Do you feel like it was all naive? Do

Lance - So, is the band back in full gear? Are you really touring the states?

Lack Of Knowledge - I don't think touring is an option, but when the 'Americanized' CD comes out and the possibility of a re-release on CD of 'Sirens' & 'Grey', I guess we might be coerced into playing a show or 2 in say, L.A. or New York, or Tahiti perhaps, as long as the moneys right. I mean you can't be an anarchist forever.

Lance - How did the retrospective on Grand Theft come about? I guess I always thought of that label as being more straightforward punk rock... Does it include the whole discography?

Lack Of Knowledge - Brian, the head honcho, phoned up out of the blue and wanted to do something, and cos he's mad he has ended up putting out all our demos/outtakes etc. The CD includes all the tracks from 'The Uninvited' & 'Sentinel' as well as studio and live tracks for things like proposed singles which never materialized and compilation LP tracks that never came out. So basically it's like The Beatles Anthology... only better.

SEMIAUTOMATIC

Semiautomatic are a fantastic duo out of New York City by way of California. Akiko does some amazing claymation stuff. Rap used to be in the Peechees and Rice. They're doing a single for my singles club. They've also got a couple of CDs out.

Lance - So, basic stuff... What made you start the band? Was it just in fun or was there some initial vision behind it?

Akiko - We wanted to make a soundtrack for a short claymation. I mailed Rap a tape from a four-track; this was when he was really into experimenting with turntables. He made a beat and added other instruments. When Rap moved to New York we started seeing what else we could do, and it became a band.

Lance - What is the basic musical concept behind the band? There is a world of difference in the two CDs. From punk rock to trip hop (sorta), what are you trying to get across in the music?

Rap - There's no real concept, we just wrote music we feel feels right. This is just how we expressed ourselves as individuals and as a collective. Growing up we listened to a lot of different things, and eventually they all come out when it needs be.

Akiko - I don't think they're that different. They weren't meant to be; we recorded them both in the same winter. On the second one we were getting a little burnt out and frustrated, and maybe that's why it's rougher than the first.

Lance - Even with the punk stuff, your sound is pretty abstract. As far as that genre, where do you feel your band fits in? What bands do you see as doing something in league with what you're doing?

Rap - As far as punk stuff goes, the only thing I have any connection to with punk is that I still administer the D-I-Y ethics that I learned growing up punk rock. I don't think we fit in at all, but it's all different — kids nowadays have a more open mind when it comes to music, listening to anything they want to, maybe its identity searching, but all-in-all the punk they see is different from the punk I saw. Half the time, I don't even know if where I'm at is still considered a punk show. It felt like it, but it wasn't. Honestly, I am out of touch with what new bands are out there, so I wouldn't even begin to know if there is some or whatnot, but my ears are open.

Akiko - I don't know where our band fits into punk. I don't know where a lot of "punk bands" fit into it, either. What's called punk rock, like anything else, can be expanded as much (or as little) as people are willing to let it. We've been compared to other bands, but I haven't heard a lot of those bands' music, so who knows if it's true or not.

Lance - Do you think that there is any relevance to being part of the "punk scene"

anymore? Your style of music is eclectic enough that you certainly don't need to rely on that scene...

Rap - The punk scene itself has become more eclectic. There is more breeding space for people's own take on punk, but it's still the same ideology. There will always be a relevance to being part of the scene, its part of you because of the DIY mentality you learned and followed.

Akiko - Scenes and their scenesters are dumb and boring. I like to differentiate between "punk" and "DIY", which is not exactly a concept that is owned by punk. As a band, we rely heavily on DIY-based communities, events, and people, but not necessarily all punk. It's not like there's no one doing cool stuff that might be more based in hip hop, dance music, activism, or whatever.

Lance - Is punk rock and hardcore mostly nostalgia for you?

Rap - It had to be, because you can only recycle the same 3 chords for so many years, and you get tired of comparing this band to that old band. And when you get nostalgic, you can always go to a show. Have a chuckle or two. But sadly, no power-violence bands passed through New York lately...

Akiko - Hardcore, definitely! And thank god! I think I would die if I had to go to one more hardcore show! Except for Limpwrist, maybe.

Lance - Where as punk rock has remained more or less the same in the past 20 years, hip hop is constantly in a state of flux. Where do you think you folks stand within that terminology? Do you think you are a part of that scene?

Rap - A part of hip hop? No way, hip hop is a different entity at all. People so into

it, hold their so-called 4 elements of hip hop with a do or die attitude. You have to prove why you should fit in. Plus a lot of hip hop kids into it are close-minded and in it for the wrong reasons. They wouldn't understand where we're coming from. But there is a new generation of pseudo-white hip hop kids that have some background in punk. Maybe they will be more accepting, but you know, I couldn't give a shit about it.

Akiko - I don't think punk has remained the same at all. People change what it is and means all the time. Aren't the Fucking Champs or the Need punk bands? Hip-hop is actually kind of similar that way. It's not that people are re-creating it; they're always adding to it or taking something from the history.

Lance - What were some of the ideas you were trying to expand upon? Is it at all fair to say that there were trip hop elements to some of what you do? Or is that style itself too dated to mention?

Semiautomatic - We didn't have any ideas about what we were doing; we just started recording songs and made it up as we went along. Maybe you could say there's some elements of trip hop, but you could probably say that about anything else as well. It's not worth caring about styles or genre names — people make up and denounce genre-names every two weeks. It's just music.

Lance - Do you follow any jazz?

Akiko - Not really, I don't know what's going on with it right now. But I like Sun-Ra, Thelonius Monk, and learning about Mary Lou Williams was really inspiring.

Rap - Nothing besides the obvious. Its more to do with how it was done, and the mindset they had during their shows and recording. I'd rather sit down and read a book about jazz, than actually spend all my listening hours understanding notes that I couldn't play anyways.

Only exciting thing about jazz for me was when it re-invented itself into freeform. Like punk, it became no rules.

Lance - Your lyrics seem to be somewhere between rants and stream of consciousness. What do you try to get across with your lyrics?

Akiko - I just write whatever seems normal to me at the time. I guess I usually write in the space between what you say to someone else, what you say when you're talking to yourself, and what you say subconsciously without words.

Rap - That Space toys need some good lovin' too..

Lance - Do you feel that people can relate to what you're talking about or is it mostly just a way for you to express yourself?

Akiko - I would hope so. But even my best friends have told me they don't know what the hell I write about. So I guess not. But I don't think people need to know the literal meanings of things to be

able to relate to a sentiment.

Rop - I don't even know what the hell she's talking about right now. But I remember NWA said "express yourself".

Lance - Does it even matter to you if people "get" your lyrics? Do you value any outside analysis of your words?

Akiko - Lyrics are an important part of a song, but just one aspect out of many. Why, are my lyrics that weird? I thought they were pretty normal.

Lance - What do you think made you chart this specific, if not wholly unique musical direction? Do you think that you're making connections between punk rock and hip hop? Or are you following your personal interests?

Rop - I have so many interests that those are just a part of the icing for my cake. I don't think I even made the batter for it yet nor found a place to cook it at.

Akiko - Connections, maybe. But not just with punk and hip hop. I don't care what genre a song or sound is from, and I'm still pretty ignorant about a lot of music styles. I think we just make music in the way that we hear it, taking sounds from anywhere.

Lance - It seems like the more any band does to expand its sound; the more they are shunned by their base of support. You're band, in some ways, exists to constantly expand its sound. How does that affect your ability to develop a support base? Do you have people telling you that they only like one CD and not another?

Rop - With every change, you experience some positives and negatives about it.



Both are usually balanced, but regardless it's still educational. If we lose whatever base of support we have, if there is any, I'd rather think we were a growing experience for them. You can't tell people to keep liking the same thing, we as humans don't operate that way. And if they do, then I think you'd be better off without them. It would function like a commercial entity, selling people something to keep them there.

Akiko - Yeah, there are people who say they like one aspect of what we do, but not another, or one CD more than the other. Or we should only do punk songs, or should make 80's keyboard songs, or be minimalists, or whatever. People's opinions are all fine, but some of the feedback is weird, it's not like I'd go up to a country singer and say, "you know, you're okay but you'd be really awesome if you were a metal drummer!" I don't know about Rop, but I'm used to being my own audience anyway. I could give a shit about a bunch of posers coming to our shows cuz we've locked in the latest style and we're the new hyped band. All I care about is sound.

The few people that really like our band are people who are generally interested in experimentation in music, and realize that when you do that, you're gonna make something great at times and something that sucks at others. That's the nature of it. I never want to get stuck on a type of sound just because reviewers or kids say we should. They can start their own bands, you know?

Lance - Do you think that the narrowness of most people's musical horizons is due to the music scene's own definitions of how things are supposed to be? Or do you feel that the music biz merely responds to what people demand?

Rop - Not merely the music biz responds to the demands, but it's them that sets the demands and force us to buy into it. And those that stick to what the biz says are either secretly trapped in it or shouldn't be bothered with. Music is a big part of our lives, if we listen and follow what someone tells us to, and we bite into it and stick to it. Then we really aren't making our own decisions. Those people, who do this, will constantly wait for the next thing they are told, and the cycle goes on and on.

Akiko - I don't think people often purposely set out to limit what they can appreciate. We just find a sound or scene that speak to us. Maybe after we're comfortable with that, we forget that there are other interesting things going on, or don't know how to approach them. I also think we have poser-phobia and are afraid other people will laugh at us for liking something new and not automatically knowing everything about it. Ha ha.

Lance - Do you think living in New York makes it easier to have a band that's both conceptual as well as musical? Do you think you could have started the band living in, say, San Francisco or Chicago?

Rop - We could have started the band anywhere, its not the place or ambiance that fully mattered, it was the state of consciousness we were in that did. Give me proper equipment and electricity and I will do something in a cave in Scotland.

Akiko - We basically started the band when Rop was in Oakland and I was in the Northwest, so I think it could be anywhere. All music is kind of conceptual anyway, isn't it? Maybe we could do it in another galaxy, hanging out with aliens.

Lance - Do you feel that you absorb your surroundings in your music?

Rop - In one way or another, yes. It's part of it. People have different ways of writing and creating songs; the surrounding is definitely a big part of your mind

structure. If you are at ease with what's around you, it helps and adds to your vibe. And if it doesn't work, we search for another output to pull our mental capacity in. Surrounding comes as a major aura in creative process. When you hear a good record, you always check where they recorded it or where the bands are from, and when you do find out, you always come up with an explanation why they sounded good, based on where they are from or why they recorded there. Listening to records like the lost Pink Floyd recordings at Stonehenge or even that Misfits 7", supposedly done at a haunted house, wouldn't be as interesting if it weren't for it being documented.

Akiko - Oh yeah, Brooklyn, the dirty-ass river, techno superclubs, the subway, wild dogs, basement parties, plants, walls. The surroundings absorb our music too — someone just stole our musical doorbell!

Lance - What do you folks do outside of the band?

Rop - I do some dj-ing here and there, and some remixing. I also have some projects coming out under the moniker

—mammatesmachine.

Akiko - I'm trying to do more claymation. I'm doing another project called Bodystocking & Tights with my friend Iraya from Sta-Prest, and we're starting a label called Seizmic Records.

Lance - Do you feel that being Asian American makes it easier when dealing with inter-band politics?

Rop - I don't know, that never came to mind. We just deal

with it like any other person. There is an Asian way of thinking, but those to me don't come into effect in situations not involving prejudice or pride.

Akiko - Maybe? Although I've played music with some other Asian kids, and being Asian never helped us get along! I don't know, do you think that all-white bands find it easier to deal with inter-band politics since they're all white?

Lance - Does being Asian American ever come into play in any way with the band?

Rop: No, I don't think it ever has. If it did, you'd see us waving the flag about it and making noise. I'm sure a lot of bands would be so proud of it, like an advantage or something, but the color of my skin simply has nothing to do with making the music.

Akiko - It makes us slower. Sometimes we ditch recording to go grocery shopping in Chinatown.

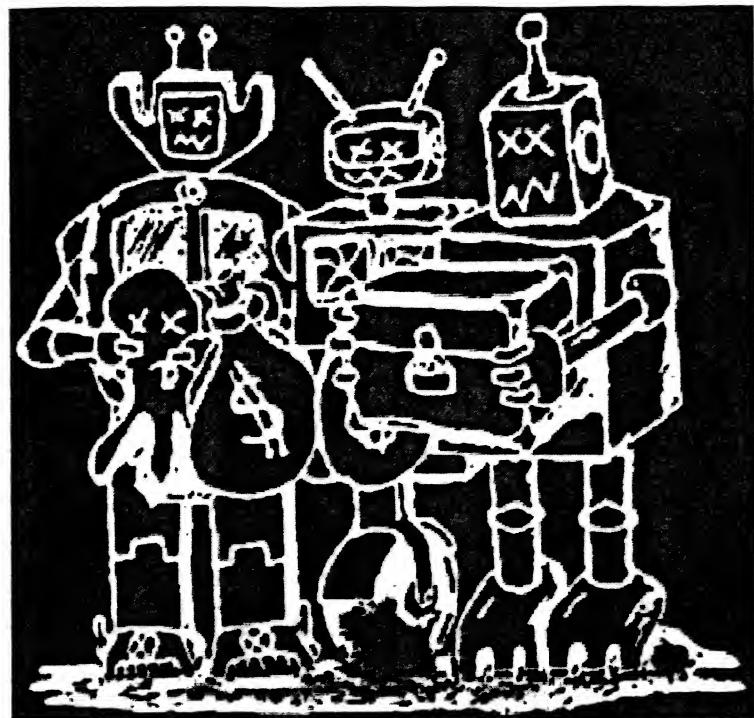
Lance - Does being a couple make it easier or harder?

Rop - A lot easier, because you know each others schedule, and know the person better.

Akiko - I guess easier. You can make songs at weird hours because no one has to go home. And you can practice in your pajamas.

Lance - What is next for y'all?

Semiautomatic - We're working on some soundtrack stuff for an indie feature film called Better Luck Tomorrow, about sociopathic Asian high school valedictorians. We're putting out a split 7" with XBXRX on Seizmic Records, and a comp called "Are Friends Electric", also on Seizmic. And we're touring this summer.



SEMIAUTOMATIC



Lance - Any last comments?

Semiautomatic - Thanks Lance!

KRONSTADT UPRISING

Kronstadt Uprising was a band named for the sailor / worker uprising near Petrograd in 1921. Mercilessly gunned down under Trotsky's order, it was used as propaganda to quash all free political thought outside the state line, in particular the anarchists who had gained much popularity in the years following the October Revolution.

Lance - How did you get into punk rock in the first place? How did you get into music at all? Was there much of a music scene in Southend when you were coming of age?

Steve - I grew up in a very musical household – my Mother played the piano, my Uncle was a professional Jazz drummer, and there were always parties with various people bringing instruments round and jamming. I remember at 7 or 8 years old thinking it was really cool. Then with the Glam stuff in the early '70s – especially David Bowie and T-Rex – I started buying the records with my pocket money and formulating the idea of one day playing on a record myself – it took until 1982, with the release of Receiver Deceiver on Bullshit Detector 2- and once I saw the Sex Pistols on So It Goes and Top of the Pops, within a few days I went straight to Seditionaries, and started ripping things up and my life was beginning. In Southend in the '70s there was quite a thriving music scene – Dr Feelgood, Eddie and the Hot Rods etc, but by the time the KU came to start gigging the scene was a bit stale and needed shaking up a bit. All the old Punk bands like the Machines etc had folded and a new breath of air was needed.

Lance - What made you decide to become a drummer? What were some of your inspirations at the time?

Steve - I'd seen my uncle playing the drums as a child and was very impressed with the sound and feel he generated. He has been a professional Jazz drummer all his life and is still playing now at 70! Also, all my families were into music – my dad was into the Big Bands, especially Gene Krupa, and his vibrancy and raw energy really struck a chord with me (I was fortunate to see Buddy Rich a couple of times in the '80s). Between the ages of 7 – 12, I'd regularly watch Top of the Pops (in the '70s in the UK, the real must see program for teenagers) and I was fortunate to be watching it when it had Alice Cooper, T-Rex, Slade and The Sweet on there regularly. The Sweet and Alice Cooper I especially loved, in Alice Coopers case primarily for his drummer Neil Smith whom I thought was excellent. The thing that sealed it though was watching The Sex Pistols on Top of the Pops performing Pretty Vacant in 1977. This changed my life forever – and seeing Paul Cook pound out the Rhythm, I knew that was what I wanted to do. Him, Rat Scabies and Topper Headon really set me on my path.

Lance - Q: How did you come across the anarcho punk scene? Q: How did you become aware of Crass and all that?

Steve - In 1979 I was buying records like the Feeding of the 5,000 12" by Crass, The Fatal Microbes etc and its intense minimalism appealed to me. By now I'd been into Punk for a couple of years, and a lot of the original bands were starting to fragment, as was the scene itself, and I began to be aware in the fanzines, Sounds etc of the rise of Crass and began to pay attention. In 1980/1981 I remember myself, along with many other disillusioned punks of the original school found a real home in The Crass, Poison Girls, Flux, Sinyx, Mob scene. They seemed to encapsulate the original spirit we'd seen in The Sex Pistols and The Clash, and given it a new, articulate update and twist.

Lance - What were your impressions of that music scene at the time? What memories do you have of that time?

Steve - It's hard to describe now, how revolutionary Crass and the Poisons sounded back in '79/80. It was like nothing we'd heard before. I remember a few of us used to have these 'Sunday morning Sessions' at Spencer Blake's house, where we would blast out all the singles we'd brought the previous afternoon, on his folks' stereo. I vividly remember how awesome the Bloody Revolutions EP was. Truly astonishing. Ditto the first time you heard Tube Disasters by Flux. Live the song had been great, but on record it really seemed to explode. There was definitely a sense that something was changing. The paradigm shift in consciousness was occurring.

Lance - Q: Were you in any bands before Kronstadt Uprising? What were Cut Throat And The Razors like? What about Bleeding Pyles?

Steve - My first band of any note was Cut Throat and the Razors. We really couldn't play and just generated this noise that we enjoyed, with song titles like G.B.H. and Boot Boys. The Bleeding Pyles was an ongoing 'pure punk' project of mine, with various musicians going through it's ranks constantly, until the final line up which became Kronstadt Uprising on 1981.

Lance - You were also doing several fanzines at the time. What were some of them and what were they about?

Steve - My first Fanzine was Protégé in 1978, which I then re-launched in 1979 – 1980, running parallel with my other fanzine 'Slaughter' which ran from 1979 – 80

also. They were mainly pictorially orientated with features on the bigger punk bands of the day. The main fanzine I put together which did quite well – Rough Trade really helped with the distribution etc – was 'Necrology' which ran from 1981 – 1982. It was great fun to do, and concentrated on the newer scene – ie Crass, Poisons etc, but in 1982 I was playing drums in the Kronstadt, playing drums in the Sinyx and doing the fanzine and couldn't do all three so I stopped the fanzine to concentrate on the bands, and ultimately the KU.

Lance - What got you interested and excited about the fanzine culture at the time?

Steve - I'd been reading fanzines since 1977 – my favorite to this day is still Tony D's excellent Ripped and Torn – primarily because they represented the views of people like myself who felt largely dispossessed by the representation of our music by the national weeklies like Sounds, NME etc. They also would often focus on key geographical areas that I found fascinating and would give an insight into the local scene. For example, in my original home town of Southend-on-Sea there were several titles: The aforementioned Necrology etc, Strange Stories, and Graham Burnett's legendary New Crimes. The 'zines really did represent true freedom and the spirit of autonomy and were the true embodiment of the Punk D-I-Y ethic.

Lance - What caused the change from Bleeding Pyles to Kronstadt

Uprising? You were still playing some of the same songs and there were a lot of similarities in the last Bleeding Pyles line-up and the first Kronstadt Uprising... Was it mostly a need of a new name?

Steve - When Spencer, Myself, Paul and Mick put the final line up of the 'Pyles together in 1981, it seemed like the band had come full circle, as by now we could vaguely play and were slowly starting to move away from the old 'pure punk' style, and wanted a name that reflected our new approach. Also, when Mick left and Andy Fisher came in on Bass, that's when we really started to discuss a name change, and after much deliberation and with a suggestion by Graham Burnett, decided to call ourselves Kronstadt Uprising. It perfectly encompassed what we were about.

Lance - How did you come in contact with Crass for the second Bullshit Detector comp? Was that track actually recorded by Kronstadt Uprising or Bleeding Pyles?

Steve - I'd been in touch with Crass through the fanzine/gig scene, and my friends from The Sinyx had been on Volume 1 and suggested I send Crass a copy of the demo that the KU had just done. I wasn't that happy with the recording but gave it to them anyway, and the rest, as they say, is history. Receiver Deceiver started life as a Bleeding Pyles song in early 1981, written by Paul Lawson and myself. Although the first time we ever went to a recording studio was just after we'd changed our name to Kronstadt, so it is an official KU track.

Lance - What kind of response did you get from that comp? I think it's still a pretty brilliant record. Did the record have a tangible affect on your following at gigs and stuff? Did you get a lot of mail from it?

Steve - The response to our being on Bullshit Detector 2 was staggering – we were getting mail from all over the world, fanzines were tripping over themselves to speak to us, hear other tracks etc – it really had a far reaching affect. It's ironic really because it was our first ever recording, Paul the guitarist's distortion pedal wasn't working, Andy had been in the band about 3 days, so technically it's far from us at our best, but I guess it does represent something and people seemed to like it.

Lance - How entrenched were you in anarchist politics at the time? Did you feel especially connected to the event in Russian history that your band was named for? How did you come up with the name?

Steve - Personally, between '81 – '83 I was quite entrenched in the politics of the time, and still retain some of those ideals to this day – much like the original wave punk ideals – pro-creation, anti-ignorance – I think these ideas are still valid. I remember reading a small amount about the KU In Russia at school, and then buying a book about it at an anarchist bookshop in Brixton, London. It really inspired me and I certainly felt kinship with their struggle. Around this time, Graham Burnett of New Crimes said it would be a good name for a band, and so after some discussion with the other members, the name was chosen.

Lance - Was there much of an anarcho scene in Southend at the time? What other bands do you remember being around that you liked and/or gigged with back then?

Steve - There was quite a good anarcho scene I Southend at the time – I personally prefer the term 'Punk Scene' if one has to call it something, but anyway. Between '77 – '87 there were some some great bands – The Vicars (featuring a young Allison Moyet who believe it or not was a belting Punk singer),

Machines, Eddie and the Hot Rods, Psychopaths were the best of the '77 - '79 class, and then from '79 - '82 you had The Kronstadt Uprising, The Sinyx, The Icons, Autumn Poison, Allegiance to No one, and then '82 - '87 you had The Prey, Burning Idols, Anorexic Dread and the Armless Teddies. I absolutely loved The Sinyx and Icons (I joined The Sinyx for a while in 1982, and Filf the guitarist with The Icons/Sinyx Played in the KU in 1983). Also the Burning Idols and The Prey, whom the KU played with a lot, as well as Allegiance and Autumn Poison.

Lance - Did you feel a connection to what was happening in London with Crass and Flux? How often did you play there? What were your gigs like at early on?

Steve - Definitely. A load of us from Southend, in 1981 - 1984, would regularly go to all the Crass, Poison, Flux, Subhumans and Mob gigs in London. London was only 30 miles away from Southend so it was easy to get there. I remember the Zigzag club squatted gig of 1983 being a high point of the scene - in one day seeing The Mob, Amebix, Flux, Poisons and Crass. Also the Centro Iberico was really cool and it felt like we'd all achieved something. The Kronstadt Uprising did play London a fair amount, especially at one point with Hagar the Womb, and by and large they'd be great gigs, but even in the 'Anarcho' scene that were was a lot of back biting and pettiness which used to annoy me somewhat, which is why we would often organize our own gigs in London, supply other bands to play with us sometimes bring alternative Poet friends of ours etc and at one point we had quite a Kronstadt Uprising collective going on.

Lance - How did you get in touch with Spider Leg for the first EP? How did you hook up with Flux?

Steve - If I remember correctly Penny from Crass, put us on to Spiderleg because he knew Derek Birkett (MD Of Spiderleg) was looking to get some new bands on the label - again we kind of knew them through the scene anyway, and thus in 82 with the help of Colin and Derek (Flux) and John Loder at Southern Studios, where all the Crass stuff was done, we recorded our first ep.

Lance - What was it like recording that first record? What are your memories of that time? How did you pick the songs for the record?

Steve - I remember being very nervous as it was an awesome studio, and my drumming at this stage was somewhat 'rudimentary' to say the least, but I think the finished result came out ok. For just a 3 piece it sounds quite powerful (Filf hadn't played on the record, and although he joined just after, he left before it was released, although Andy thought we should put his name on the sleeve anyway) Blind People was one of the very first songs we ever played together and we often used to open up a gig with that number, so we put that on first. Dreamers of Peace was again an early song we liked, although with Derek and John Loders help we did re-arrange it a bit in the studio. Xenophobia and End of Part One were more recent and again firm live favorites, and they all seemed to gel well as an ep.

Lance - What about the artwork? Who did your artwork? How important was the packaging of the record to you?

Steve - The packaging was very important, as I always believed in presenting a total full-on KU - one which you'd always be aware of, through subliminal design/overt design, logos, our Banner on stage, badges, flyers etc. My girlfriend of '83 - '88 (Veda Pond) did a lot of the later KU artwork which was brilliant, Ian Hayes-Fry did quite a lot over both eras and did the banner for us, and Celia Biscoe, Kev Hunter from the Flux's partner, did the actual designs for The E.P. Andy Fisher loved the Black Rose so much Celia had drawn, he had a brilliant tattoo made up of it.

Lance - How important was the band's image as an anarcho band? Were you ever self-conscious about it?

Steve - In terms of being labeled an 'anarcho' punk band, I was quite unhappy because it seemed to the easy option for people in the mass media to compartmentalize us and simultaneously try to limit the movement by defining it, which I was against. To me the core nexus was always punk, pure and simple. Initially we always wore all black, in order to reflect our nihilism and to present a strong unified visual force. Latterly, with Goth-Glam influences, this obviously had an effect too, and led to a strong but different image also.

Lance - Did you ever play with bands outside of the anarcho scene?

Steve - The first era of the band ('81 - '84) only really played gigs we either organized ourselves or were with sympathetic punk bands, like Fallout (ex-Six Minute War), Hagar the Womb, Lost Cherees, Nightmare etc The second era would play with different bands such as The Bollock Brothers or Malice, but again we'd often try and play with various friends bands and present a unified front, like when we'd play with the Burning Idols.

Lance - What made you decide to cover a track by Crisis? Did you know them? What do you think of Death In June?

Steve - Crisis had always been one of my favorite Punk bands at the time, and Spencer and Paul also really liked them. One day for fun we started messing around with Holocaust ad it sounded quite good, till ultimately we started playing it live. People used to love the song, and I'd like to think we helped turn a lot of people onto Crisis. I didn't know them personally, and as for Death in June, I was so into Crisis, I didn't want to know what they sounded like really in case it was a let down. Various Goth friends over the years always seem to highly praise D.I.J, but I have to plead ignorance.

Lance - Did you tour at all after the first single? What were out of town gigs like for you?

Steve - The first single, although recorded in 1982, owing to various label problems, wasn't issued until 1983, by which time we'd moved on and didn't

really take advantage of the publicity. We were more concerned with writing new songs and recording them - songs from this period (late '83 - early 84) would be The Knife, The Day After, New Age, and Battlecry etc. Some out of town gigs were great for us - especially in the New Towns like Harlow and Basildon, London was always good - although some places we were met with complete incomprehension and indifference.

Lance - By the time the second single came out, you had made some major changes in your line-up and sound. First of all, why so many line-ups? Weren't you the only original member throughout the band's history? Did you ever want to change the name?

Steve - I was the only original member throughout the second line up - so believed in the songs and the things we were writing especially in '84, that when Paul and Andy wanted to split the band in '84, I was determined to carry it on and put a new line up together, which I did. The second line up was pretty constant, from '84 - '86, until Murray then Gary Left, and then in '87 I'd had enough of trying to

constantly hold the band together, so when Kev said he'd had enough after us not finding a new singer, I agreed and we called it a day. I think, after Gary Smith left in late '86 and through the bands dissolution in late '87, if we'd found a new singer we would have changed the name, as it would have been a completely different band.

Lance - Your sound evolved into something more along the lines of the Heartbreakers or Rocket From The Tombs. Was that a style you had been into from before or did you get into along the way?

Steve - The love of my life musically was always that real blistering Punk/R'n'R, as epitomized by The Stooges, Social Distortion, Pistols, Dead Boys, Heartbreakers, Ramones etc and Original KU members Spencer and Paul felt the same. However, at the beginning of the KU, we could barely play our instruments, and for myself I'd say it wasn't till 1985 that I began to get any vague idea of what to do, so it wasn't till then that musically I could translate my ideas into songs, which came out with that raw sound. Also I'd say that after various let downs, hassles and general disillusionment with some of the more didactic elements of the anarcho scene, it encouraged us in late '83 and early '84 to see the reemergence of Johnny Thunders, Ramones etc and this kind of did bring us back to our roots and simultaneously take us off in a new direction. I understand that for people who only like the '81-'82 KU era of Blind People, End of Part One, that the latter stuff may not be quite up their street, which is fair enough, but I do feel it stands up in its own right.

Lance - How did that influence in your music affect the political aspects of what you were doing? Do you feel you were still sticking to your original ideals?



Steve - In terms of our original Punk inspired DIY ideals, absolutely. The second single was independent financed, most of our gigs were self organized; we'd go out of our way to help other bands, so yes we certainly lived that ethos. Lyrically it did evolve/change as I mentioned earlier – and some members of the later line up were not so politically motivated, so obviously this had an effect, but overall, I'd pretty much say that in terms of core ideals we stuck to our beliefs, although again I'd understand that anyone seeing pictures of us now might find it incongruous seeing this glam-punk image with biting lyrics – but hey that's what we were about!

Lance - How did your change in style affect your audience? I know other bands like Omega Tribe were doing something almost similar in their style. Do you feel like your supporters stuck with you through the changes?

What were the responses to the second single?

Steve - Around late '83 when we began to move away a bit from the Unknown Revolution ep sound, I think some people weren't sure about the newer material and would still expect us to play Receiver Deceiver all the time. So yes, it was a bit hard at first, but then people began to slowly accept it, and by the time of the second single with the new line up, it was almost an entirely different audience. The second single had appalling distribution, and thus didn't get very far, so fifteen years later it's good to get it out on CD with better distribution at last. (Note: one of my personal KU favorite songs – Live for Today – was recorded at that session for the single but was never issued until the aforementioned CD)

Lance - What kind of press did you get in

general throughout the band's career?

Steve - In Southend we would get excellent press, even nationally sometimes in Sounds and NME, although the best press would be in the fanzines of the time, like Final Curtain and Obituary. Once Bullshit Detector came out, we started to get featured in magazines all over the world, do radio features in Europe etc. The Unknown Revolution ep consolidated this. I moved to London in 1985, and Stuart the bass player did likewise in 1986, and consequently we featured in a lot more publications at the time. In Southend people seemed to regard us as some kind of Seminal Punk band, and right up until the split audiences there would always encourage us. The area had always had an active music scene, and if its known for nothing else it should be respected for giving Dr Feelgood a forum and helping them establish a fertile land that sowed the seed for the Pistols et al.

Lance - Do you feel like you related to the rest of the anarcho scene? Were you a part of it or did you feel alienated by it?

Steve - I'd say '81 – '84 we definitely were part of the scene, consciously so between, in my opinion, the scenes peak of '81 – '83. We would regularly correspond with, play gigs with and generally believe in the whole essence of this period. 1982 it felt like we could take on the world – I remember when we used to play gigs in this period I'd get very fired up and want to kick over the statues and start the Revolution NOW! A highpoint for us was recording the Unknown Revolution ep.

Lance - How important were the lyrics overall to the band?

Steve - I'd say between '81 – '84 they were very important and came as one with the music. I don't like extremely didactic lyrics or at the other end of the spectrum banal ones, there's a fine line to get it just right. Some of our best lyrics are on Xenophobia and the song Twilight of your idols (not released). In the '84 – '87 era, it was a completely different entity, going back to our punk Roots – i.e. the Iggy/Thunders etc influence - and the lyrics were still important, but in a different way. I was very nihilistic at the time and loved the dumb minimalism of The Stooges and in the reverberation of songs like DIRT felt that it captured the beat of the Universe.

Lance - What led to the band splitting? Were there any bad feelings between members after the split? Do you have any contact with the ex-members?

Steve - Andy and Paul split the first line up of the band – there was some slight animosity but that was cleared up fairly soon afterwards. The second line up split was a slow disintegration – Murray left in 1986 due to a bad drugs problem, Gary in late 1986 for reasons only he knows, and finally Kev left in 1987 after a fruitless year of looking for singers, at which point Stuart and I said enough is enough and stopped too. A year later we returned with neo-glam/punk band The Ghosts of Lovers. Kev went solo under the name The Misanthrope for a couple of years. Murray went on to play Bass in Sonic Violence in the early '90s and did quite well with them. Gary didn't do anything. From the first era, Spencer played briefly in a couple of rehearsal only bands and helped form Sonic Violence, Paul Lawson didn't really do anything, Mick Grant became a Christian, and Filf hung up his guitar. Andy Fisher played guitar in Anorexic Dread for a bit before roadying for the Cure, and moving to the States, where he now lives in Cincinnati. I'm still as obsessed as ever with raw, burning rock and roll/punk, still love Social Distortion/Johnny Thunders and Stiv Bators, and so after the KU I played in The Ghosts of Lovers, Nicotine and Razorblades and The Hearts of darkness. After a three year lay off due to the death of my father, I am now writing songs again, and in Feb 2001, for the first time in 12 years, I began recording a few demos with Kevin de Groot, the KU-second era guitarist. Once I get a line up together for my new band, we'll start playing immediately. Further info will be found via the web site at: <http://www.kronstadt-uprising.co.uk>

Lance - How do you reflect back on the band and what you did? What are some of the highs and lows that come to mind?

Steve - Overall I'm fairly pleased with what we achieved. I do wish we'd been able to play outside of the UK, and maybe released an album at the time of Unknown Revolution ep quality of some of our 'lost' songs such as Insurrection, Act of Destruction etc, but hey, with the release on Overground last year of the KU retrospective 'Insurrection', at least a few things are out there. It's mainly demos on the CD, but at least there is a record of some of our experiments. So highs would be: The first gig, playing on a stage, people listening to us and giving us respect, Bullshit Detector (my copy arrived on my 17th birthday), the Unknown Revolution ep, the London gigs in 1982, and the final farewell Southend gig in 1986. Most of all I'm pleased with any sense of inspiration that we left, and the sense that anyone could do it, just get up there and kick out the Jams!

Lance - How do you reflect back on the whole anarcho scene? Do you think it really had an impact or was it all naive or was it something in the middle?

Steve - Probably somewhere in the middle. I think that Crass, etc certainly contributed to the reemergence of serious protest in the '80s eg CND/Animal Aid etc, as well as encouraging the traveling lifestyle and the sense of self-empowerment. I think most of the best bands of this period provided a much needed forum for debate, and acted as a cipher for the anger felt against an anachronistic old world order, as personified in the Thatcher-Reagan years. Finally, yes, I would be the first to admit that some of the music was a bit naive in places, however, it shouldn't be forgotten how GREAT the following records, and many others of the period, actually were:

Crass - Feeding of the 5,000

Poison Girls - Where's the Pleasure

Flux/Epileptics - Everything 'till 1983

Mob - Let the tribe Increase

Sinx - Everything 'till 1983

Because in 1000 years times, as artifacts of an era, I think these will stand up far more so than whatever the mainstream had to offer.

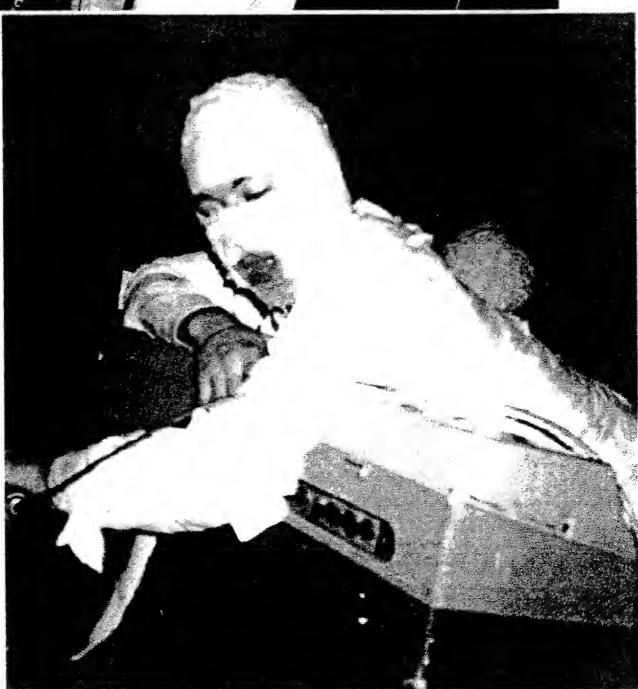
KRONSTADT UPRISING
KRONSTADT UPRISING
KRONSTADT UPRISING



THE MUMMIES



Long
ago
at
Gilman
Street...



RECORD REVIEWS

HAN BENNIK & TERRIE EX "The Laughing One" CD

This is a fascinating improvisational record between the old and new. Han Bennink is an avant-garde drummer who has been playing around since the '50s with everyone from Eric Dolphy to Paul Bley to Peter Brotzmarín. Terrie Ex is, of course, the guitarist for Dutch band, The Ex. The Ex have, of course, dabbled with free improvisation for some time now and have always maintained their connection to the form.

This record is an interesting splatter of guitar and percussion. With

(Empty View Rekerdz, PO Box 5312, Portland, OR 97228)

BOYRACER "Boyfuckingracer" CD

Are Boyracer still a functioning band? I don't know. I do know that some incarnation passed through town and spent the night on my futon. But I don't know if it was a fleeting flashback or what. It would be a shame if they were done for good. I love Steward. But it's an entirely different beast...

Anyway, this is a long over-due collection of Boyracer material spanning the band's 10+ year career. I think they get wrongly stuck in the camp of UK indie pop because of their releases on Sarah. They've been sort of typecasted as a Another Sunny Day / Field Mice type band, when they really have always been much more diverse. I don't mean that as a slight on Sarah bands. I've always been a defender of that label from back when I worked at Revolver and I was convincing stores that they needed Doom 7"s AND Even As We Speak 7"s.

What Boyracer has in common with those bands is a great sense of melody. Unlike some bands that come up with parts and then go back trying to find a tune, Boyracer have always been able to craft a catchy pop song first and then arrange it in a matter that both hides the tune in textures and simultaneously reveals it through incessant melody. There's a hell of a lot of noise, fuzz and distortion on this record. It's warm and inviting. But at the same time, every song pays the bills. At least one catchy moment per song that will stick in your head.

Boyracer are what I think of when I think of great pop punk. Not pop punk in terms of the Lookout or Fat or whatever. Pop punk in the traditional sense that also includes the Chords, the Wedding Present, and the Mice. The highlights of this record accentuate my point. You can't go wrong with songs like "I've Got It (And It's Not Worth Having)", "He Gets Me So Hard" and this odd little version of "West Riding House".

(555 Recordings, www.tsoft.com/~aelison/555)

REVIEWS, VIEWS, USELESS RAMBLINGS...

most of the tracks clocking in at less than 2 minutes and only one at over 5 minutes, these short bursts inadvertently become one long piece. The mood it creates is one of tension and paranoia. This could also be due to the sparse structure of the tracks. Not surprisingly, this record is very reminiscent of some of the tracks on the Ex's "Instant" CD featuring all improvised performances with a variety of musicians and configurations.

It's an exciting record as the drums are often clearly the lead instrument due to the character of the playing. The variety of rhythms and parts definitely set the direction of each song. The guitar is also nice though more subdued than I was expecting. There are a lot of interesting textures typical of Terrie's playing which is itself often reminiscent of Arto Lindsay.

Still, with the amount of short songs, I get the feeling that there's a whole dimension that they chose not to explore. This record at times feels like they're testing the waters. Neither musician completely committing. Hopefully, that's an indication of more deep reaching collaborations in the future.

(Terp, PO Box 635, 1000 AP Amsterdam, Holland)

BOW ROETHKI "What Was A Scare" CDEP

I don't know much about this duo. Got this randomly in the mail. For a while, there were a lot of bands like this. But right now, it's a nice change of pace from all the "challenging" stuff I've been getting in the mail.

Bow Roethki is Kristabelle Lee and Dave Coscia. Kristabelle seems to be the main person as she writes the songs, sings the songs and plays most of the instruments. This bedroom band is from Portland though what they do is certainly reminiscent of a lot of UK lo-fi stuff like the Slamt bands or even Sarah Records. It's sweet pop music with lyrical nods to the Beat Happening School of tasty-treats-as-metaphor-for-romance type lyrics.

It is especially catchy and if you just focus on the song structure, it's a lot like Heavenly or even the Buzzcocks. But the bedroom recording inhibits the sound in a pleasing way. Bands like this often find more success with understated performances than with an all out attack. Everyone knows you're recording in your bedroom on a little cassette four track. Nobody is expecting "Flight of Icarus". The subdued approach takes the focus off of the technical aspects and redirects the listener to the songs themselves.

Again, it's not groundbreaking. But I'm assuming this is their first release and it shows a lot of promise. On a personal note, it was a nice little present after a hard day of work.

GRAHAM COXON "The Golden D" CD

Nope, I didn't really care for this guy's first solo record. I wasn't expecting or even hoping for any Blur-isms. But I wasn't really looking for self-conscious lo-fi or Dinosaur Jr.-isms either.

I wasn't expecting anything from this record and Graham certainly doesn't have anything to prove this time around either. Still, it was quite a relief to know that Coxon is sort of letting loose and doing a record with no pressure other than to make the music that he loves. I mean, he's a punk rock kid deep down inside. Shit, he used to go to Epicenter when Blur was in Frisco. He's the only person I know of that would mention Universal Order of Armageddon in Spin. Hey, he slept with one of the Huggy Bear grrls for years; that must count for something!

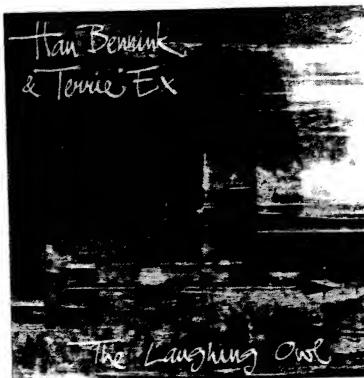
One sixth of this record was originally performed by Mission Of Burma, which makes me think that this whole record is a nod of nostalgia. Ah, the good old days and the old school days and the salad days and yeah, yeah, I wasn't there and neither was Graham. I'm happy enough that I'm old enough to remember punk rock and hardcore BEFORE pits and stage diving. Old school punk gigs to me mean standing on a chair at the back of the room so I could see the band over the audience's heads. Slam dancing? No, I

bruise way to easily. Only when I've knocked back a few and I figure I'm going to be getting a few bruises anyway. Might as well be getting them while seeing Verbal Assault blow away 7 Seconds at Fender's.

Was that enough nostalgic ranting for you? No? Well, here's a punk record from Graham Coxon who really just wants to have fun and be accepted and all that. It's a good record. I don't think the Blur stigma is so bad anyway. It's not like he was in Menswear or some shit. Besides, his version of "That's When I Reach For My Revolver" blows away Moby's version. It's enough to make a BU alumni weep for days gone by.

A lot of today's emo is rooted back to Mission Of Burma. This record captures a lot of that feel with its melodies and harmonies buried in the noise and fuzz. Historically, when Brits try for this formula it winds up sounding like Jesus And Mary Chain or Spacemen 3. But Graham has obviously got some different reference points. There's a little Dischord and a little Homestead thing going on here. It was hinted at with the last Blur LP. But left to his own devices, it becomes much more cohesive and listenable mélange.

(Trans Copic, www.transcopic.com)



DeMARINIS, PAUL "The Edison Effect" CD

I don't know whether this guy is a con artist or insane, but this may be the most intriguing hoax I've heard since the "Ghost Orchid". Part scientific exploration and part art installation, the Edison Effect was a project where lasers played audio recordings from ancient phonograph records, many of which were wax cylinders. Inspired by the Edison's original notion of communication with the dead (as poetic as it is eccentric), DeMarinis combines the "found" sounds with up to date recordings as well as analog and digital reconstructions to try and find meaning between ways communication exists in the process as well as form of recording.

Now that may seem entirely intellectual as far as value, but things take a turn for the odd as military marches are mixed with synthetic drum rhythms at completely different pacing. The result is kind of a mess and the meaning lost. The meaning may also be lost as Edison's piano recitals are displayed and then reconstructed with each false-note. The result is not only the documentation of the recording technique but also the codification of the actual music piece as it's own value. In other words, the misplayed piano recital and its accidental arrangement has it's own merits alone.

Some of the most fascinating parts are the combines (audio Rauschenberg?) of different musical and vocoder loops from the '20s, '30s and '40s. The collections of sounds range from totally abrasive to inadvertently rhythmic. My favorite track is titled "Etaion Shrdlu" which is simply a "blank cylinder, recorded over 20 times with no signal other than the vibrations, whirring and inner clunkings of its own clockspring mechanism". The mechanical noise is beautiful in how its synthetic form is not actually determined by human planning. The random-ness of the noise is somehow organic and as a result becomes a merger of technology with nature. Much of this record reminds me of NON, if you can believe it.

I suppose the hoax comes with whether or not

you believe that these recordings are all authentic. I don't see how they all could be. "Fragments From Jericho #1 and #2" claims to be sounds taken from the most ancient audio recording. According to the liner notes, while making a clay cylinder, voices and sounds were rudimentarily captured in its inner walls. Another is a recording of a song about the anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti coupled with a sermon advocating a "more moderate path" for the Italian American radical community. Sounds like bullshit to me. But it's good bullshit.

So, in the noise world, you kind of need to have your glass half full. I mean, this is mostly bullshit in its intentions and the actual goal of the installation and this record seems to only be expressed in the mind of the artist himself. But taken at face value, its fascinating and quite beautiful.

(Het Apollohuis, Tongelreestraat 81, 5613 DB Eindhoven)

THE EX "Dizzy Spells" CD

The Ex is an enigma. Seminal punk band. Euro free improvisers. Anarchist collective. This ain't no party. This ain't no disco. Fuck, Holland isn't even a country. It's a commune!

For over two decades now, The Ex have been creating it's own vision of a liberation music orchestra. They've released record after record of musical collages and bursts both beautiful and abusive (I consider both of these terms to be positive and they are meant in praise). Their newest release, "Dizzy Spells", is still another challenge to their dedicated followers. Twelve songs considerably more subdued than their most recent material, the Ex have again shifted to a new position from attack to seduction.

In "Seduction" Baudrillard wrote "total liberty, or total indeterminacy are not opposed to meaning. One can produce meaning simply by playing with chance or disorder." This could have been the manifesto for The Ex and their musical discourse. Historically, they dive headlong into areas often completely foreign to them and at times unwelcome. Their new record, while maybe not a tightrope walk, is still unlike anything they've done in the past. While creating a record of downplayed rhythms and elliptic structure they still surge forward into uncharted realms of their own private investigation.

Experimental music implies that an actual experiment occurs in the making of the music. "Dizzy Spells" is an experimental album. While it's an experiment that isn't without precedent (there are certainly shades of early Mekons, Wire, "Steady Diet" era Fugazi, maybe even the Au Pairs at times) it is unique to the context of The Ex. They can't help but bring their own brooding yet strangely playful style to whatever they do. Discordant and often staccato guitar parts become their own rhythm connecting with the always unique and often tribal drumming style. The vocals clearly announce their proclamations while becoming their own texture. In a format that doesn't often rely on traditional melody and harmony, this record in it's understatement creates it's own beautiful field of tonality.

Albin's production with The Ex (he also recorded "Starters And

Alternators" for Touch And Go) has been a godsend. The work they've done with him is certainly their best sounding (with the one exception being their Peel Session) and it's certainly their best drum sounds. They've made all of these changes with little effort. It makes me wonder if they themselves know how bold they are.

(Touch and Go)

Fiji "The Glue Hotel Tapes" CDEP

Ooh, I really like this one. It's great that Jamie from Scarfo is making music again, though it's without the support of a functioning band now.

Fiji is a one-muso band along the lines (in function at least) of Sparklehorse. There are, in fact, moments that do recall Sparklehorse in it's blending of '60s 7th chord pop music with the fuzz and white noise of today's underground.

On the first track, "Pillshop", I was almost knocked down by a feeling of nostalgia. It really reminded me of the old days way back in the early '90s (tongue only partly in cheek), wandering around rainy streets listening to "Oh My Lover" or "Victory" by PJ Harvey on my Walkman. It's an interesting little rhythm that's equal parts international, hip-hop and theatrical rock – n – roll. It's a lot of varied sounds strung together by a disturbingly catchy tune. A lot of the music's style is in that it's so purposefully unusual with its use of melody.

This is the music made by people that felt (like I do) that "The White Album" was the Beatles' finest moment. Maybe their only moment, to some... There's even a bit of an attempt to usurp that atmosphere with a song about Manson with lyrical references about "piggies".

At this point, this CD has been out for a little while. Last I heard, Jamie was doing something with the dreaded Sheryl Crow. I guess everyone needs a day job. Let's hope he finds more time to continue this fascinating thought

process.

(Impresario, PO Box 357, London SE19 1AD, UK)

HALF JAPANESE "Hello" CD

Lester Bangs once described Half Japanese as "...sub-Jonathan Richman white-burba-infantilismus vocals that as they natter tunelessly onward actually tell little stories... This may be a whole new songwriting genre, or at least one terminal of the Lou Reed "I walked to the chair / Then I sat in it" school of lyrics." Of course, that's a compliment and remains true to this release.

I've always liked Half Japanese and all things Jad Fair albeit usually from the sidelines. Over his long career, I can't say there's anything I've disliked. I mean, I'm one of those people who still think the Half Japanese song was the best thing on "Let Them Eat Jellybeans". But my interest has come and gone. Maybe that's why I see him as an inspiration as J Church's relationship to the public has been very similar.

You know what's weird? Call it a conundrum. Okay, don't. But it is a little weird how on songs like "Red Sun" there is an uncanny resemblance to The Weakerthans. I'm sure, if anything, it's the other way around. But it's the first thing I thought on first listening to this record.

The profound influence on punk rock and independent music by Jad Fair is now coming full circle. Influence in the indie world is always nebulous when you look outside the world of dilettantes and track down bands at least attempting to do their own thing. It's a pyramid scheme. One band like the Velvet Underground or Devo will influence the subsequent generation of bands. They in turn influence the following generation. The mathematics are exponential and soon you have a million bands saying they're influenced by "Duty Now For The Future" though I doubt that record sold that many copies! Half Japanese are certainly one of those bands at the top of the heap. Though it's often buried, confused and reconfigured, their influence exists either purposefully or inadvertently in a million indie bands around the world.

For that reason alone, you've gotta give 'em a little props for sticking to their guns and coming up with this interesting album of tales and adventures. It's amazing that in this day and age, someone can still create a very distinctive and unique style and do it for 20 years AND still manage to sound fresh and excited. You wouldn't think that there was much uncharted territory for Half Japanese. But there is a lot of really interesting stuff here. The keyboards on this record are tasteful and add a psych meets "Battle of the Band" era Turtles type of sound. Lots of inventive backdrop music here but also a lot of fresh pop songs. "Patty" might actually be my favorite song on the record though it almost sounds like a Pavement cover (though Pavement were an especially self-conscious Half Japanese most of the time).

I pretty much enjoyed this record from start to finish. It's very comforting that Half Japanese are still putting out these types of records. And the records are good.

(Alternative Tentacles)

ICONS OF FILTH "The Mortarhate Projects" CD

As we all (or at least "I") eagerly await the new full length from Icons of Filth, this CD retrospective is a great reminder of this old UK hardcore band and how much of an influence they've had on generations of anacho punk bands.

It's funny that so many bands cite them nowadays as influential seeing as a lot of their early stuff now seems to be pretty derivative of Discharge as far as song structure. The "Discharge Haiku" style is in full effect on their earliest material as well as part of the record. There is also a clear influence of Conflict as can be imagined (the bands were touring partners for some time).

One thing that really stands out for the band, however, is their clear recordings. Singer Stiggy Smeg, all was had a good basic understanding of hardcore lyric phrasing. The lyrics work with the song as opposed to a lot of anarcho bands that seem to be trying to squeeze as many words per verse as possible. The results could often be a mess.

Icons of Filth never really suffered from that with the best examples coming from the first 16 tracks on this CD coming from their only LP, "Onward Christian Soldiers". The recording is also very clear without the domineering "metal" guitar sound that cluttered up a lot of UK hardcore from the same scene.

The CD also includes the tracks from their three brilliant EPs as well as their original demo tape. Thirty songs of hardcore can be a bit much. But I'm certainly not arguing with the value for you dollar aspect and it's nice to see all of this stuff collected in one spot.

(Go-Kart Records, PO Box 20, Prince St. Station, NYC 10012, www.gokartrecords.com)



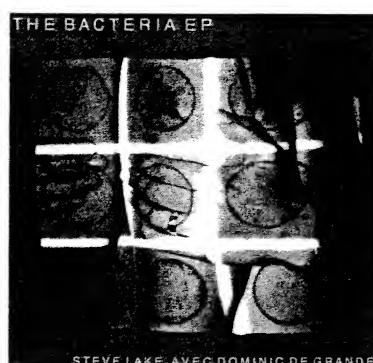
STEVE LAKE "The Bacteria" CDEP

Four fascinating solo pieces from the former front person of Zounds. This is serious music from the morbid revelers. This isn't really angry music. But it's painful. Interpret the lyrics personally or politically; either way they're about pain.

Musically, the piano backdrops are fascinating little Kurt Weil-esque tunes. At times it's like the Bad Seeds' more somber moments. Other times, it's like Tom Waits. "Languishing In Languedoc" is somewhere between Kurt Weil and a Fellini soundtrack.

A lot of this is thanks to Dominic DeGrande's piano playing which is simple and deliberate. The more understated moments verge on "ethereal" in terms of This Mortal Coil or the Virgin Prunes. It's like the music of a whiskey bar being played at a funeral.

I don't know if this little EP is mere experimentation or a teaser for a possible full length. But it's very engaging and an interesting new travel plan for someone most comfortable off the beaten path. (Beverly Recordings)



MAGIC MAGICIANS "Girls" CD

One part 764 Hero and one part Black Heart Procession and here's what you get; a very pretty record that's charm is in its manipulation of nostalgia. While this isn't Brit Pop (of course) it will appeal to people like me (those who should know better) in the same way that Blur can (at times). Mix elements of various generations gone by - a little "Arthur" era Kinks with a little Television with a bit of the Pixies - and you've got a band that sounds, though not unexpected from their pedigree, fresh and catchy as hell.

Now, there's a fair amount of this kind of stuff floating around in the indie pop world today. I can dig a bit of Quasi, Olivia Tremor Control or Elliot Smith. But whereas a lot of those people tend to "pay the bills" at times, the Magic Magicians are still at the stage where they are defining their style. Despite being a two piece, John Atkins multi-instrumentalist and they are happy to bring in outside musicians to augment wherever necessary. John's bass playing and keyboarding as well as Joe Plummer's fluid drumming create a dense field with little muddle.

Despite the lo-fi studio disposition (this record was recorded "in houses, apartments, and a theater that is now a reggae nightclub" according to the liner notes) the sound is pretty huge. Like the bands I've mentioned earlier, one of the biggest benefits of home recordings is the new vocal style and range that comes with. Partly due to the comforts of recording at home (if it doesn't work out, no one has to know about



it!) and the fact that sometimes you're singing softer than normal so your roommates don't hear you, this new vocal style has more in common with the stoned singing of the '70s. Like Neil Young saying he had to stay up late to be tired enough to record, the Magic Magicians vocals are conversational without sounding bored.

(Suicide Squeeze, Box 434, 4505 University Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105)

PIRX THE PILOT CDEP

Nice little 5-song debut from Ernst's (ex Jack Acid, Bumblecrumb, Half Empty, God Hates Kansas, etc.) new power trio. Ernst has always had pretty decent taste if his record label is any indication. Now he's got a band that fully lives up to those expectations. I've liked all of his past bands. But I think with this new group, he might be able to really create something really special.

While it's some of the most sophisticated music he's made (there's lots of... uh, parts) it still comes off as straight for the heart punk rock. His vocal stylings are especially featured in this band. They definitely brings to mind middle period Government Issue ("Joyride" maybe...) and a little T.S.O.L. ("Beneath The Shadows" possibly...). Actually, on third and fourth listen to this CD its remarkably like Government Issue. Even the guitar sound is almost reminiscent of Tom Lyle on those records. I'll bet if they covered "Understand" it would totally kick ass.

Lyrical, it's a mish mash that finds success in its use of allusion while the song titles at times exist to throw you off the trail. It's stream of consciousness with a bit of self-consciousness and a sense of humor even. How else can you write Ginsberg-ian lines like "Self proclaimed mystic. Black helicopter theorist. Viva la whatever." in a song titled "Potato Cannon Ricochet"?

It's interesting to look at the trajectory of someone like Ernst and the musical expressions it's wrought. I mean, could anyone have predicted something like this from the guy that used to be in Jack Acid? (New Disorder Records, 115 Bartlett St., SF, CA 94110 www.newdisorder.com)

PROPAGANDHI "Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes" CD

I don't need to tell you that Propagandhi are one of the greatest hardcore bands around. Needless to say, this third proper album (their first in four years) delivers just how you would expect it to. While a lot harder than their previous efforts, this record still maintains the great sense of melody and vocal harmony that is part of the band's musical identity.

What I find so great about this record is the lyrical maturity. I've always agreed with what this band has been about. But I'll be the first to admit that at times (on the first album anyway) it all seemed a little obvious. I don't know. I guess these things can't be said enough. But I guess I'm more paranoid of becoming strictly a propagandist than others (though I'm happy to be a propagandist at times). I find that the lyrics on this record are much more sophisticated and therefore more accessible to someone like me.

Like their previous full length, there's a zone on this record that I especially love (on "Less Talk" it was the zone from "Nation-States" to "Pre-Teen McCarthyist" to "Resisting Tyrannical Government"). Starting with the unbelievably powerful version of "Fuck The Border" (an I Spy song) to the incredible title track and ending with "Back To The Motor League". It's one of those perfect moments and Propagandhi are one of the only bands I can think of to pull it off twice in a row. (Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193890, San Francisco, CA 94119)

PURRKUR PILLNIKK "Ehgji En:" CD

Fuck, this is a great little CD. I can't believe I haven't investigated this band before now. And I have no idea what this is all about...

Purkur Pillnikk was an old Icelandic band fronted by Einar Orn who would later go on to front KUKL and the Sugarcubes with Bjork. But with the exception of occasional vocal inflections, the Purkur Pillnikk has little in common with those groups.

As part of the late '70s Icelandic punk movement, their sound is adventurous and raw. While never strictly adhering to the three chord formula, the band have more in common with a stripped down Television or even Pere Ubu at times. The occasional quirky moments are tied together with Orn's ranting vocal style. It's all in Icelandic, so I really don't know how structured

it is. But phonetically, it does often seem like an energetic Mark E Smith.

The recording was done at Southern Studios in London, which was a good move. The clarity of the production greatly helps a band like this in conveying its sound. None of the rhythmic subtleties, which are really crucial in many songs, are lost.

With any luck, this CD will indicate a possible reissue of music from other pre-KUKL outfits like Theyr and Tappi Tikarrass. God, I wish I knew Icelandic so I could read the liner notes...
(Smekkleysa S. M. HF.)

SAM RIVERS TRIO "Firestorm" CD

My pal Marin was telling me about how great this line-up was live when they blew through San Francisco a couple of months ago. I've really, really regretted missing those sold out gigs at Bruno's. But this little souvenir of a record will do fine for now.

A trio of multi-instrumentalists, this CD was recorded live at a series of New York dates and covers a lot of ground in terms of the band's diversity and individual musician's creativity. Doug Mathews whose main function in the trio is that of bass player, switches from bass guitar to bass violin to bass clarinet. He's even spotlighted on a solo piece called "Embers", written for his late father. Anthony Cole (yeah, he's related to Nat King Cole) is the band's drummer. But he also plays Tenor Sax and piano on this record. The variety could be chaotic. But there's a nerve that runs through all of the tracks that can only come from a band very comfortable with playing together. The improvisations are often "free". But the psychic connection between players keeps the whole package very, very cohesive.

The standout tracks for me on this record are "Flame", "Unity", "Smoke" and "Dominant". On these tracks, bass and drums are left behind for an all reed trio of Soprano and Tenor sax and Bass clarinet. I don't know that "Unity" is in anyway a reference to Albert Ayler, but he has certainly influenced River's and there are moments in these pieces that drift towards "Spirits Rejoice" era stuff. It's abstract expressionism unless you think Jackson Pollock was speaking in tongues when he painted. Then it's "Spiritual Unity".

The performances on this record are lively as all hell. You would never have guessed that Rivers was well into his 70's. He sounds as fresh and as curious as a player in his 20's. This record is a reminder of past experimentalism. But it's not nostalgic. It's more like a burning arrow cutting through the mediocrity. (RivBea Sound, 803 Park Lake Pl., Maitland, FL 32751)

SAUCER CD

Not too much info with this CD. I think it has something to do with former members of Boyracer as it's on 555 and the band are definitely British.

Yeah, the info is pretty minimal. Seven tracks over 40 minutes of music with no song titles, names of band members or recording information. Nothing to shape the listeners opinion one-way or the other.

In many ways, this music is a cross between the earlier Boyracer pop music with what was called space rock a couple of years ago. Taking some of their cues from Spaceman 3 and maybe My Bloody Valentine, Saucer turn simple musical ideas and turn them into mesmerizing soundscapes using oft demeaned tools of drone and repetition. Like the aforementioned bands, the delicate and pretty nature of the music is made into a strong force by building concentrically over a period of time rather than with changes and seemingly more complex arrangements.

The seven tracks are all connected by the use of a simplistic pattern as a starting point. Dynamics and timbre are used in broader strokes as opposed to the obvious and often clichéd use of most guitar oriented groups. The amount of layers as opposed to distortion sets Saucer apart from the My Bloody Valentine route and almost into areas explored by Branca. Either way, its ambience alone is very pretty and engaging.
(555 Recordings, www.tsoft.com/~aelison/555)

SPARKLEHORSE "It's A Wonderful Life" CD

I think this is the third album. Every dumb ass has been writing that it's the second album. But I'm pretty sure it's the third and I'm too lazy to go in the other room and find out if "vivadixiesubmarine..." is an EP or a full length. I think it is and it really doesn't matter, as I won't mention that record again.

I really loved "Good Morning Spider". When our van was broken into in Leeds and my CDs got stolen I was especially sad about losing "Soft Bulletin" and that one. I couldn't imagine a day going by without hearing "Pig" or "Ghost Of

His Smile" or "Hundreds Of Sparrows". I still haven't been able to find a used copy of it. Anyone out there got an extra copy of the vinyl?

This new record is much more low key. No rip-roaring, ass-kicking moments like "Pig" or "Happy Man". It's a shame because I thought those songs really helped "Spider" in that it made the record move and gave it real depth. There's a nice valium-like haze over "It's a Wonderful Life". It's nice and sedate. It is probably what Linkous feels when he watches Capra and thinks of America. It's like being in a happily contained snow globe. The delivery is so discreet that it's almost too personal.

Unfortunately, it's just not enough somehow. I don't know how to explain it. I don't want to sound like a gym coach saying "I really expect Linkous to give 110% and nothing less". Really, every song on this record is great. They're sweet and concise and quite imaginative. Simplistic melodies are arranged with pretty keyboards and instrumentation creating moments that are both naïve and baroque. In fact it's so interesting that when guest vocalists Tom Waits and Polly Jean Harvey chime in, they're so apparent in their approach that they sound ostentatious.

But it's really stuck in one gear. It's like the Stray Gators jamming with This Mortal Coil. It's cool and it's unusual. But it makes me a little sleepy. Even when the secret bonus track creeps up, it just puts us right back in the golden slumber.
(Capitol Records)

SUBTONIX "Trophy" 7"

You are crazy if you pass this up. The Subtonix are the best band in the Bay Area I've seen in ages. Fantastic whacked out punk rock from a bunch of wild girls who's lack of self-consciousness allows for a unique approach and energy like I haven't seen in ages.

I guess some people would call this post-Riot Grrrl and that's half right. But there's something else going on with this band. Smart lyrics and autobiographical tales communicate some of the bands inner secrets. But there's also an element of playfulness in their hyperbolic images of gothic horror.

The music is a new step in an old direction, mixing guitar, bass and drums with keys and some great sax playing. Holding it all together is the bass and vocals with their incessant melodies and tense phrasings.
(No Love Records, PO Box 426828, San Francisco, CA 94142)

CECIL TAYLOR "Fondation Maeght Nights Volume 1" CD

CECIL TAYLOR "Fondation Maeght Nights Volume 2" CD

CECIL TAYLOR "Fondation Maeght Nights Volume 3" CD

I wish I had more room on my website! I'd take all three of these 30+ minute CDs and link them up as they were meant to be heard. It would be glorious to have the entire hour and forty-seven minute piece available in it's entirety. You would think that with CD technology and blah, blah, blah, there would be a way of fitting a couple of hours worth of material on a disc. I guess not.

Featuring regulars Jimmy Lyons on Alto Sax and Andrew Cyrille on drums, this recording is first remarkable as the only legit available recordings of Taylor with Sam Rivers. Still early in his continuing career, Rivers rambles a lot over the long piece and finds many interesting passages. The length of the piece actually gives all four musicians a lot of room to wander and while the over all feel is that of four scientists in the lab testing out their hypothesis, there are many unique solo moments as well.

Unlike "The Two Towers", "Die Hard 2: Die Harder" or Robin Gibb, the middle part of this trilogy isn't the least appealing. In fact, the two extended solos that Taylor takes are the highpoints of the whole piece. The first is a great mathematical problem that makes me think of Dali's "Lincoln" painting. Up close it looks like a chaotic mass of images but stepping back reveals the image of Lincoln. Same with these solos; listening note to note will give you a headache while letting it flow over you is like massage. Always great hearing him humming and singing along with his creation.

With the length of this recording, it's a challenge to the listener, as the improvisations aren't meant to entertain. But diving headlong into the music allows for epiphanies as to how a band like this operates and what it must have been like creating with Cecil Taylor at the time. It was only the second time that I listened to all three CDs back to back to back that I started to see it as a drama... a sort of intellectual conversation being carried out and over the top with amphetamine exalt. If you think Taylor is way out, this will help get you onto his level.
(Jazz View)

VELVET UNDERGROUND "Bootleg Series Volume 1: The Quine Tapes" CD
 There's a lot of hoopla about this three CD box set of live recordings mostly from San Francisco's long gone Matrix club. I guess Peter Abrams, the old club owner, is now claiming that he's got board tapes of the actual shows and that one of his board tapes is what actually made up the "1969" live LP and blah, blah, blah. Yeah, yeah, who gives a fuck?

I personally like the way these recordings sound. Live room mic job and it sounds like a real bootleg. It gives you an idea of what the audiences were really hearing and, like any decent live bootleg; you have to let your imagination fill in the blanks. Besides it's the confirmation of the rumor mill that bootleg fans feed on and there aren't many bootleg fans hungrier than the Velvet Underground minions. Everyone has known about the Robert Quine tapes for years. But only an elite group of traders (the kind of scum who don't feel you have the "right" to hear this music if you don't have something worth trading them) have been privy to this material until now.

This collection is on Polydor. It's great to know that one of the best things that this blood sucking label has and will ever release was recorded in a club with a common tape recorder and one hand-held microphone.

The one thing that I do feel is a real shame is that the performances aren't complete. Quine even mentions in his liner notes that he took his cassette tapes and only put what he thought were the best moments on the reel and that's what these CDs are made up of. Would've loved to hear it all unabridged. Oh well...

I don't have to tell you how important this band is. They're my favorite band of all time. If you don't know enough to know why this release is important, read a book. There is plenty to read on the VU out there. Even better, go out and buy all of their studio records first. Once you've joined the tribe, you'll feel the need to this.

(Polydor, can you believe it?)

JOHN ZORN "First Recordings 1973" CD

I have to admit that this is probably my favorite Zorn release. I don't know. A lot of his stuff isn't varied enough to really engage me. Most of the records sound like he's got this new idea and he's working over the course of an hour long record. Well, sometimes the chase is better than the catch as Lemmy once said and I'm inclined to agree. Of course, I say all this only having owned five or six of his recordings (which I guess is like saying, "I've only had escargot, so I don't like French food") so I'll probably completely change my mind in a few months like I did about Jad Fair, Saccharine Trust and, uh, Beck.

But I love this record. It's really insane at times and frightening as well. The recordings involve long and unedited saxophone pieces with everything from primitive tape looping to toys, cookery, TVs and a vacuum cleaner. But it's all used to create long abstract images. Don't think of Eugene Chadbourne so much as Nurse With Wound with Sam Rivers. There's even an end track that's a tribute to Albert Ayler. Pretty cool influence to wear on your sleeve for a teenager in '73.

(Tzadik, 61 East Eighth Street Suite 126, New York, NY 10003)

V/A "The Christmas Fisting" EP

Hmm... I just got this a month ago (it's the end of July as I write this) and it's supposed to be a Christmas record. It was actually meant for release at a December gig from last year where the three bands on the comp were playing. It was a really great gig at the Underworld and if you were in London and not there, you blew it.

Anyway, this three song 7" features Southport and Capdown covering each other's songs. I have to admit that I wasn't too familiar with Capdown. But they're a mix of ska / reggae and punk / hardcore. Not usually my cup of tea, but I can get into it for the purposes of this novelty record. Of course, Southport is the new band featuring Simon who was the original guitarist / songwriter / sometimes vocalist for Snuff. They're pretty great and the take they do on a Capdown dub-style song is very Fugazi-like. It makes me wanna re-investigate their full length on Go-Kart.

Of course, the real stars on this record (as is the case anywhere they appear) are Hard Skin. It's been a while since we've seen any recorded music from this amazing skinhead juggernaut. But it's well worth the wait as they wonderfully massacre the Christmas standard rechristened "Ding Dong Merrily, Oi Oi!". What can I tell you about this band? They're great and no matter what you think of their intentions, they've produced some of the greatest Oi! music of all time. This track carries on a great tradition. I should mention (for bragging purposes) that I got an advanced tape of some stuff they've recorded presumably for TKO. Bigger production this time around and it sounds great.

I dunno what the availability is like on this record. If you find it, you

should grab it, as I'm sure it's a one time only pressing as it was for a one off gig (Household Name Records, PO Box 12286, London, SW9 6FE, UK)

V/A "Echo - The Images Of Sound II" CD

Is this the "process of removing the boundaries between the various media and arts" or just a bunch of nerds pretending to be artists and not scientists by "performing" in front of an audience? Whatever it is, there are a few interesting moments on this CD without consistency in reason.

Richard Lerman, among other things, plays a bicycle. He mics it up and gets people to bang on different parts with metal bars to create different sounds. Hey, didn't I see Zappa do the same thing on the Steve Allen show? I think I'm not wrong. I'm not sure, but I think that this is the same guy I saw a separate piece on where he got a bunch of bikes and rigged up contact microphones near the spokes and put amplifiers on each bike. He then got a bunch of his nerd friends to ride the bikes throughout the city making an improvised symphony of metallic clangs and hums. Sort of interesting guy with some neat ideas, but considering he doesn't expand greatly on Zappa's original idea (which was probably a gag) I'm not sure if this counts as experimental.

Martin Riches got his degree in architecture so you can imagine what kind of a Teutonic artist he is. His "percussion machine" is made by converting predetermined graphic signals which activated woodblocks to create perfect rhythms. What's most amazing to me about it is that this extremely complicated machine is essentially a metronome. I guess that's what makes it art.

Terry Fox is a performance artist and not ashamed of it. But his contribution is beautiful sustained hum that sounds something like a single discordant note played on a violin eternally. Amazingly, the sound is entirely created by strings stretched out along the wall vibrating under different objects (a bow, a sardine can, his fingers). No electronics at all.

What I don't get about this is that there's some snobbish undercurrent throughout the whole thing that these artists are creating something totally new both in form and content. It's really nothing less than snobbery. Experimentation with electronic sounds and the distinction of aesthetic notions within those sounds goes back to the '60s. Alternative approaches to classical acoustic instruments goes back much further (obviously). But now these art snobs (I mean there's even an ex-Fluxus guy here) have "discovered" this art form sort of like Columbus "discovering" America. Will Paul Panhuysen claim to be the "founder" of Throbbing Gristle when he one day "discovers" them?

Hey, there is a lot of pomposity in punk rock so why expect it to be any different in the avant / blip beep / electronic / ambient world? Take away parts of the polemics and it's still a pretty interesting listen though I find the whole thing to be secondary to a lot of the Irdial stuff.

(Het Apollohuis, Tongelreestraat 81, 5613 DB Eindhoven, The Netherlands)

V/A "Rokk i Reykjavik" CD

I guess this is some sort of soundtrack to a film made about the early '80s Icelandic punk scene. Wow, that sounds like something that I would love to see. I know, fat chance.

Anyway, this is one hell of a compilation featuring a lot of bands I'd only read about and more I'd never even heard of until recently. It's all great. But here are some of the standouts:

Ego are great. Straight up punk rock that you would expect to find on "Bloodstains Across Iceland" if there is such a thing (I would imagine that there is). Slightly dubious song titles ("Sieg Heil") though in the context it seems more theatrical than anything else. I mean, this was the breeding ground that evolved into the anarcho scene around KUKL.

Some of the best moments are, in fact, provided by pre-KUKL bands. I've already talked in this issue about the greatness of Purkur Pillnikk who are featured on this comp. But more great music comes from Theyr and Tappi Tikarrass.

Theyr are experimental and combine certain elements of Gang Of Four and PiL with driving punk rhythms. Their occasional blasts of open guitar wash add an "arty" edge as well as imply an anxiety that can't be contained by traditional chord progressions.

Tappi Tikarrass seem miles more professional than the other bands on the comp. Bjork's punk band is brilliant. Imagine a punky version of the Sugarcubes with male / female rants reminiscent at times of early Chumbawamba. I'm not a huge fan of Bjork. I like some of her stuff. I'm neither really here nor there. But she could really sing even back then. (Smekkleysa S. M. HF.)



DVD & VIDEO REVIEWS

"End Of The Art World" video

At little over half an hour, this fascinating film covers a lot of ground and a lot of heady artists. From Jasper Johns to Andy Warhol to Robert Rauschenberg to Michael Sot to Roy Lichtenstein, Alexis Krasilovsky ("Beale Street", "Exile", "Blood", author and director of the book and film "Women Behind the Camera") manages to create her own unique piece of art by appropriating not only images but the artists themselves.

Intended as a documentary, the film was conceived as a result of Krasilovsky's feelings that too many important artists are forgotten or looked over for any myriad of reasons. Acknowledging that the artist is often just as responsible as the lack of an understanding audience and media, the function of this film was to document the artist of the time, the late '60s.

But her own artistic leanings betray any strict objective nature of the documentary. Instead, the film becomes a vibrant collage of images and soundscapes. Shot in 16mm, the film is as grainy as can be and the fact that much of the audio doesn't sync up with the pictures only helps to accentuate both. It's effect is like drastically panning audio channels on a record... like the Ramones first album.

Often, she captures the artist in its natural (or what they want people to perceive as natural) habitat. Andy Warhol isn't so much interviewed so much as shown at one of his openings surrounded by all his followers and hangers-on. Rauschenberg is shown in his studio working on one of his thousands of assemblages. Roy Lichtenstein is interviewed in a faux "talk show" manner that's funny in it's loose deconstruction.

One of the most fascinating moments in the film is the interview with Jo Baer, a minimalist artist. Interviewed in front of one of her paintings of a great rectangular shape, she's awkwardly charismatic in her nervousness in front of the camera. As Krasilovsky continues to provoke her by asking her why she feels uncomfortable and asking her to repeat herself, Baer reveals herself in a way that's quite touching. As soon as she begins talking about art and regains her stride, the interview is over.

Another striking moment, which is also humorous, is the interview with Joseph Kosuth. When asking him how he feels about art history and how he communicates through his art, he stands at a bus stop while she films and asks the questions yelling back and forth on the other side.

The film is short, which probably works to its advantage, as most people I know have no idea who most of these artists are. I wasn't really sure of who some of them were and this is stuff I like!

Anyway, here's the monologue that ends the film. I thought it was great.

...We are in a new era in America
Where we have to say "Death To The Pigs"
...And when you begin to talk about
Death To The Pigs
They will take you seriously
And will begin to vamp on you
And you won't be saying that
Unless you truly want to do something
(Rafael Films)

"Painters Painting" Video

I was drawn to this film while searching for stuff on Rauschenberg and was pleasantly surprised to find that it was directed by Ron Mann. While much more involved and detailed than "Imagine the Sound" the approach that I appreciate so much is the forwardness of his documentary style. Unlike many documentaries that are defined in the editing process, Ron Mann is methodical in his documentation of the post World War avant-garde art scene in the States allowing room for different conclusions to be drawn. The film is quite linear while never avoiding the desire to treat the film's subjects as odd and unsuspecting celebrities. Theory is mixed with gossip and straight interviews are mixed with the making of art.

Starting with the Abstract Expressionists and their champion, Clement Greenberg, the film documents the only interview footage I've ever seen of Barnett Newman who speaks directly on the intentions of his art and that of his contemporaries like Pollock and DeKooning.

Newman, "There's no questions that my work and the work of the men I respect took a revolutionary position, you might say, against the bourgeois notion of what a painting is as an object, aside from what it is as a statement because in the end you couldn't even contain it in any bourgeois home."

He also speaks directly to the components of his paintings and the moment of epiphany.

Newman, "What had I done? What was it? ...I got rid of atmosphere... It does not divide. It united the thing. It's not a window."

The viewer than is taken on a slightly eerie visual trip as the camera

tours Newman's studio right after his death. Finished and un-finished work become confused and the large and over-sized canvases feel like lovingly painted mausoleum walls. In his commentary through art, Newman was still interested in beautiful things and surely he would want to be surrounded by them in death.

Clement Greenberg is also interviewed. I'm not sure how long before he died that the interview took place. While cubism isn't much mentioned in the film, the influence of Duchamp is made clear by Greenberg by declaring him to be the most daring and groundbreaking artist in the 20th Century. It begs the question as to whether Duchamp can really be considered an American artist. For convenience he must be otherwise DeKooning couldn't be considered to be an American artist. Otherwise, the notion of abstract expressionism being America's revenge on Europe is brought into question. Is it enough to physically make art in America to be considered an American artist?

The death of Newman leads to the birth of the next generation as perfectly defined in Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. Over poorly lit footage of him making one of his combines, Rauschenberg perfectly sums up his differences with the abstract expressionists while detailing what he took from them. His use of and ambivalence towards the tactile has often led to him being confused as an abstract expressionist or even a pop artist. Even in his pointing out how he differed from the abstract expressionists, he reveals how important they were in relation to his art in terms of art history if not more intimate influence.

Rauschenberg, "I was never interested in their (the abstract expressionists) pessimism or editorializing. You have to have time to feel sorry for yourself if you're going to be a good abstract expressionist. I think I always considered that a waste... With their grief, and art passion and action painting they let their brush strokes show."

There is some reminiscing as well about how Rauschenberg discovered his "erasure" paintings where he would literally erase a work of art. His first was his most famous and wound up being quite a task as he erased an entire DeKooning. It's "L.H.O.O.Q. – The Next Generation"!

His brother artist, Jasper Johns is also interviewed though with a much lighter self-analysis.

Johns, "What about Dada? What kind of question is that?" (laughs)

Though by no means a Dada-ist, Johns was also stretching away from the Abstract Expressionists. While they showed the light at the end of the tunnel to the American avant-garde, it was Johns and Rauschenberg that broadly opened up the field of possibility. Still, it was the Dadaists through Duchamp that allowed the abstract expressionists to go beyond the formalism of most American art up to the '30s. Johns, like Rauschenberg, reveals his own niche in art history.

Johns, "The idea that had come to me (was) that I should have to mean what I did. Then accompanying that was that there was no reason to mean what other people did. So, if I could tell that I was doing what someone else was doing then I would try not to do it. Because it seemed to me that DeKooning did his work perfectly beautifully and there was no reason for me to help him with it." (laughs)

Helen Frankenthaler continues this playful vibe in describing how she discovered her own style as a need to break free from the rigid structure she had subjected herself to. Inadvertently, it's a Situationist idea being taken to one possible conclusion.

Frankenthaler, "Having looked at Cubism which can be very detailed, I just wanted to break free, put it on the floor, throw the paint around..."

When asked what it was like to be a woman painter, her reply is "I think the first issue is being a painter."

There's a lot more to this film and it is interesting to hear everyone discussing his or her work. At times, with Frank Stella for example, it sounds more like a defensive posture. For Andy Warhol, it's the blasé indifference that comes off as shallow as ever. Like Greenberg says about pop art, "it's easy stuff".

But the film, while trying to document all aspects of the art process (creating as well the market and art criticism) only furthers the age-old irony: it's a sport of intellectuals. Of course, the sport is bolstered by profiteers and pseudo-intellectuals who do nothing but create the idea that art appreciation in post World War II America is equally bourgeois. But that makes the class-ist assumption that intellectualism is for the rich.

The sad reality that I was left with at the end of the film is that everyone is essentially an opportunist. The artists may have their ethics, but understandably, they need to make a living. The art critics exist to document the genealogy as it occurs as well as the great leaps forward. The patrons are there for equal doses of egoism and generosity. The dealers are there as the sycophantic glue maintaining the status quo in terms of business in the art world. Everyone is making money or at least trying and the end result is that the art world gets smaller and smaller every year.

(Mystic Fire)

"The Stendhal Syndrome" DVD

I first saw this film four or five years ago, and I felt then as I do now. This film is not a horror film. It's been wrongly judged in that context due to the director's reputation. But I think history will show that Dario Argento isn't really a horror filmmaker. Horror films actually make up just a small percentage of his films and "The Stendhal Syndrome" is no horror film.

Dario Argento is a genius. As an Italian director in the generation (and tradition) of Antonioni, his films are far more cerebral and avant-garde than the traditional horror fair of even Bava and the like. His films are Freudian investigations that exist somewhere between psychological thriller and horror. The violence is a device more so than a selling point.

It took a little while for "The Stendhal Syndrome" to make it to the States. I don't know why that is. But I'm sure there are some politics behind it as Argento is only too happy to criticize Hollywood and of the bad experiences he's had making films for major American studios. What's strange is that this DVD is on Troma (who I love in a weird way) instead of Anchor Bay who have been releasing most of the old Argento stuff on DVD.

"The Stendhal Syndrome" is something of a return to form for Argento. After a couple of severely hacked films done for American companies and a brief hiatus, this film was his chance to make a film strictly following his own muse and without the business end of the film industry in mind. Working with his daughter, Asia, for the second time he was able to explore darker subject matter. The previous time they worked together was on "Trauma" which, despite being ruined by an editing process aimed at success in the US horror market, still dealt with issues outside of the norm and deeper into his psychoanalytical fascination as the main character suffered from bulimia.

Asia Argento has carved a name for herself as an actor not afraid to play characters who either have severe psychological disorders or who has to face emotionally and physically abusive obstacles. In this film, she is a detective named Anna Manni sent to Florence to track down a serial rapist / killer known as Alfredo. While at the Uffizi Art Museum she not only discovers that she suffers from a mental disorder that makes her hallucinate that she is inside the paintings she's observing (the Stendhal Syndrome, of course). She passes out in the crowded museum only to discover she has a bloody lip and her gun has been stolen from her purse. Of course, it turns out that the gun is stolen by the serial rapist / killer who then becomes the pursuer and finds Argento in her hotel room. In a brutal and horrifying scene, Alfredo rapes the detective in her hotel room.

Here are a few pics of DOOM...



setting things in motion to create a long, complex story ending with a Hitchcockian twist.

Along the way, there are some classic Argento innovations with shot design and cinematography. Always an innovator that avoided any sort of computer special effects, there are some amazing sequences including a dreamlike sequence where Anna hallucinates that she sees Alfredo murder another one of his victims. In slow motion, we see the bullet leave the gun, through the wall of the victim's cheek, through her body and out the other side. In another sequence, Anna takes medication and we actually see the pills travel down her throat. This drawing of attention to otherwise mundane events is a lot like the gun battle scenes in "Three Kings".

Another surreal moment happens when Anna reflects back to her first contact with one of Alfredo's victims. Rather than say it's a dream or use some sort of obvious special effect, the shot is designed so she can walk directly from one set to another. By betraying the cinematic illusion created by sets, it's an interesting twist on a dream sequence.

Argento has always been good with heightening tension with simple over the top acts done without fanfare. During the rape scene, one horrifying image that stayed with me was when Alfredo produced a razor blade out of his mouth during the rape scene. He claims that he needs to cut her lip so she looked just as she did when she passed out in the museum. The importance of that dialog offsets the fact that he's had a sharp razor in his mouth the entire time.

There are other Argento stand-bys. Soundscape is always very important to his film especially when used to heighten paranoia. Like some moments in "Suspiria", there are sequences in the film that use obtuse audio overdubs of chattering voices. While part of the background, they're recorded so manic and unrealistically, they become a reflection of the protagonist's psyche.

That day in the art museum becomes the factor that binds together Anna's disorder with her victimization by Alfredo. The use of this type of logic plays large in the film and forces the viewer to make a lot of otherwise unrealistic leaps of faith. That's always been part of Argento's style. His intellectual approach and matter of fact form of arguing his characters logic helps make it all believable no matter how absurd. Surrealism and special effects are blatant and never hidden. There are no tricks here that he doesn't want you to see.

A lot of people argue that this is one of his lesser works. I disagree. While nowhere in the area of "Profundo Rosso" or "Four Flies On Grey Velvet", I found the film to be gripping and fascinating. I suppose if you're looking for a horror film like "Suspiria" or "Opera", you'll be disappointed. But I think that this film is one of his better. It's certainly his best in recent times and I really can't think of another film like it.

(Troma, www.tromaville.com)



They seem to be having fun...

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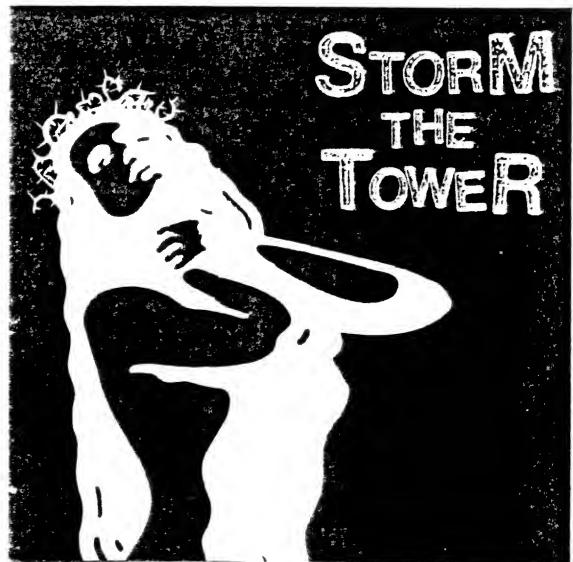
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